

Theology
A
VINDICATION

OF THE

Bishop of LONDON'S

THIRD

Pastoral LETTER.

IN

ANSWER to a late PAMPHLET,

ENTITLED,

A DISSERTATION OF INQUIRY
concerning the Canonical Authority of the
Gospel according to St. *Matthew*, &c.



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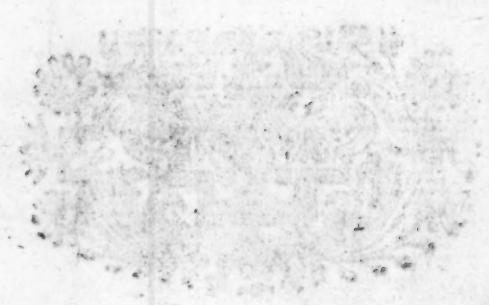
VALUATION

OF THE
Bishop of London

Pastoral Letter



A Dismissal
concerning the Canonical Authority of the
Bishop according to the Statute of 1840



LONDON:
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A
VINDICATION

Of the Bishop of London's

Third Pastoral LETTER.



SINCE the *Author* of the *Dissertation* now before us, has been pleased to premise to his main Work, an Assertion, which, if found true, would make it a Task of no little Difficulty to ascertain the Names and Number of the *Canonical Books* of the *New Testament*, it cannot be judged improper to spend some Time in the Consideration of it. For as the Truth or Falshood of what is here affirm'd, will be of no small Consequence in the following Debate; so shall we also be from hence enabled to make a probable Judgment both of the Abilities and Integrity of the *Inquirer*, and what Use he designs to make of his *Learning* and his *Reader* too, in his present Treatise. It runs thus:

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¹ Our Saviour and his Apostles were no sooner off the Stage, than Forgeries of all Kinds broke in with irresistible Force; Gospels, Epistles, Acts, Revelations, Liturgies without number, published in the Names, and under the feigned Authority of Jesus Christ and his Apostles, abounded in the Christian Church; and as some of these were as early in Time, as any of the Writings in our present Canon, so we find they were received promiscuously with them, and held in equal Veneration and Credit.

In a word, they were made use of by the immediate Successors of the Apostles, and many of them read in the publick Assemblies of Christians, as canonical Scripture, without the least Mark of Distinction in point of Authority.

The Assistance he calls in to support this monstrous Position, stands thus: *Vid.* says he, *Dodwell's Dissert. on Irenæus* I. Sect. 38, 39. *Toland's Amyntor*, p. 20. *Clarke's Reflect. on Amyn.* p. 277. *Mill Prolegom.* §. 133, &c.

If these three great Men, *Dodwell*, *Clarke*, and *Mill*, speak clearly in his Favour, the Inquirer has gained a very great Point; but, in Reality, they all three affirm the direct contrary, viz. That no Books whatsoever, were ever held in equal Credit or Veneration in the Church of Christ, with the Books of the present Canon. The Examination and Adjustment of false Quotations, is a kind of Argument that conveys very little Pleasure, either to him who writes, or to the Person who reads; but Necessity must be comply'd with, and Truth maintain'd, altho' with the greatest Trouble. And,

That we may have a clearer View of what *Mr. Dodwell* lays down in the two Sections here cited, we must know, that the only Point he there

¹ Dissert. p. 1, 2.

there endeavours to prove, is this,—That the present *Canon* of the *Gospels* was established in the Time of *Trajan*, and not before. For, speaking of the Writings of the *New Testament*, and the Tradition of the *Elders* till the Times of *Trajan* and *Adrian*, when this Objection is started, That the *Writings* of the *New Testament* were less distant from the Performance of the *Facts*; from whence it came to pass, that the Disciples, who were *Eye-witnesses*, bore Testimony while Things were more fresh in *memory*; and that *more Men* were then alive, who might have given witness to this kind of Writing: Mr. *Dodwell* replies, “ I willingly and easily “ allow this to be true, if it be understood of “ the *Writings* themselves, that they were writ “ while Things were more fresh in Memory: “ But if it be understood of a *Collection* of the “ canonical Scriptures into a *Canon*, and a *Publication* of them thus collected through the “ *universal Church*, to the Intent that the *Catholic* Churches should have that *Canon* for “ the future, as a common Rule of *Faith* and “ *Manners*, I do not think this to be so true as “ the Adversaries imagine.”

This Argument he pursues through the *thirty-ninth Section*, and more than once affirms, that ‘till the Times of *Trajan*, there was no ¹ *Canon*,

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no

¹ Hoc, si de *scriptis* ipsis intelligatur, ut fuerint *illa* recentiori memoria scripta, lubens ego facileque verum fuisse concessero. Sin de scriptorum canonicorum *collectione* in *canonem*, collectorumque per ecclesiam universam *publicatione*, ut *canonem* illum deinceps pro fidei morumque *norma* haberent Ecclesiæ Catholicæ communi; id vero non existimo adeo fuisse, quam putant adversarii, verum. *Dodwo. Dissert. in Iren. §. 38.*

² Nondum constitutus est librorum sacrorum *canon*, nec receptus aliquis in Ecclesia Catholica librorum certus numerus,—

no certain *Number* of Books establish'd by the *Catholick Church*: And again,—' The true *Writings* of the *Apostles* were not distinguished by any *publick* Mark or Censure of the *Church*. But all this, which relates immediately to a *publick* and *authoritative* Declaration, made by, and for the use of, the *universal Catholick Church*, is very far from proving, that any Forgeries were ever held, by any Assemblies of *Christians* in *those Days*, in equal *Credit* and *Veneration* with the present *Gospels*. For if, as Mr. *Dodwel* asserts, the *Canon* of the *Four Evangelists* was establish'd in the Times of *Trajan*, the Cause why these *Gospels* were then declared *canonical*, and received as the common *Rule of Faith* and *Manners* by the *Catholick Churches*, must proceed from the united Testimony of *All Christians*:—That *these* had always been acknowledged as the *Writings* of the *Apostles* or *apostolical Men*, and consequently held in *greater Credit* and *Veneration*, than other *Writings* that treated of the same Subject. And,

We find Mr. *Dodwell* himself frequently asserting the same Truth; especially when he maintains, that ¹ no *private* Man in the Age of *Irenæus*, could be compared with the *Apostles* in regard to the Gift of *Miracles*, he concludes thus: " So shall we have no *Writings* that will " be able to rival the *canonical* *Writings* of the " *New Testament*." And again, speaking of the *First Converts* to *Christianity*, whom the *Apostles* usually ordained to be *Bishops* and *Deacons*; when he had particularly mentioned *Clemens Romanus*,

Hermas,

¹ Nulla prorsus nota, aut censura ecclesiæ publica constaret, quæ quibus essent anteferenda. *Sect.* 39.

² *Privatus* nullus fuerit, qui gradu miraculorum præditus fuerit *Apostolico*.—Sic scripta nulla habebimus, quæ scripta N. T. canonica poterunt æmulari. *Dodw. Pref.* §. 8.

Hermas, Ignatius, and Polycarp, he concludes with this clear Distinction:—' The Writings of *these Men*, as they are inferior to the *apostolical*, so are they to be preferr'd to all *human* Compositions.

Thus we at once see, what were the real Sentiments of Mr. *Dodwel*, viz. that he constantly held those *evangelical Writings*, which were collected into a *Canon*, and *publickly* received by the *universal Church* in the Time of *Trajan*, to have always been of a superior Value, and distinct Consideration from all other Writings whatsoever;—*none could rival them;—All were inferior to them.*

His next Evidence is Mr. *Toland*, whom we may reasonably allow to be fairly quoted; but how Dr. *Clarke* (who writ purposely to *disprove* what Mr. *Toland* advanced) can be brought in as a proper Witness, is somewhat strange. The Doctor's Words are these: " 'Tis also certain, " that as the unquestioned Works of the Apostles, *whenever* they were cited, were look'd " upon by all as infallible and decisive; so the " other Pieces, whilst they were quoted and " urged by some, might as freely be denied, " or not yielded to by others. Vainly therefore doth Mr. *T.* object, *That they who believe " the Epistle of Clemens and the rest to be genuine, cannot give any Reason why they do not admit it into the Canon of Scripture.*" Thus far the Doctor. As vainly therefore, in his Opinion, does the *Inquirer* assert, *That Forgeries were admitted with the canonical Scriptures, without the least Mark of Distinction in Point of Authority.*

But,

¹ Sunt itaque eorum scripta ut *Apostolicis inferiora*, ita tamen *humanis* omnibus longe anteferenda. *Dissert. 2. in Iren. §. 16.*

² *Clarke's* Reflect. on Amynt. p. 277.

But perhaps Dr. Mill may speak more to his Purpose; I must therefore follow him there also. Now this learned *Author*, who spent his whole Life in Inquiries of this Nature; after he had assured us, from the Authority of *Justin*, that some Parts of the *Gospels*, or of the *Old Testament*, were publickly read in *Christian Assemblies* on every *Lord's-Day*, he adds immediately, "For by this Practice the primitive *Christians* testify'd, that these our *Gospels* obtain'd the same *Credit* with them, as the Writings of *Moses* and the *Prophets* did in the *Synagogue*; and that these had the same Authority among *Christians*, that those had among the *Jews*. 'For altho' Writings, which were not *divinely* inspired, were sometimes read to the People, yet that was done occasionally only, and in some particular Churches; for instance, the Epistle of *Clement* among the *Corinthians*, and that, as I may say, in the Place of *Homilies*, or to inform their Morals. But the *Gospels* (together with the *Epistles* of the *Apostles*, as many as were then placed in the *Canon*) were held as *divine* among all *Christians* every where; and, as such, were read in all Churches every *Lord's-Day*, no less than the Volumes of the *Law* and the *Prophets* (were read) every *Sabbath* by the *Jews*."

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¹ Licet enim subinde recitata fuerint ad populum etiam scripta haud *ἱερόνυμα*; factum tamen id ex occasione duntaxat, idque apud particulares quasdam ecclesias, uti v. gr. epistola *Clementis* apud Corinthios; & quidem *Homiliarum* (ut ita dicam) loco, sive ad informandos mores. Evangelia vero, (una cum epistolis Apostolorum quotquot in canonem jam relatae fuerint) pro divinis apud omnes ubique Christianos habebantur; adeoque in singulis ecclesiis lectitabantur quovis die Dominico, non minus ac volumina legis & prophetarum, a Judæis κατὰ τὰν σάββατον. *Mill. Prolegom.* p.38.

I desire the *Reader* will be here pleased to observe, what a full Specimen our *Author* has given us of that ¹ *strictest Regard to Truth*, with which, he assures us, he has conducted himself in this *Inquiry*. A bad Cause may call out for any sort of Assistance; but surely it is much beneath the Character of a *Gentleman* to give it any of *this Nature*. Had it been the *Inquirer's* Misfortune to have mistook Mr. *Dodwell*, the manner of his Writing, always thronged with *Matter*, and the Roughness of his Language, might have pleaded some Excuse: But what must we think, or what shall we speak of that Man's *Morality*, and Love of *Truth*, who brings in Dr. *Mill* and Dr. *Clarke* as Vouchers for his Opinion, when in the very Places he refers to, they speak in as full and open a *Contradiction* to what he lays down, as the Power of Words can make them. But in Reality, *such* are the Enemies of these *Pastoral Letters*, and of the Cause of *Christianity*, which is so well defended by them!

Having thus shewn the notorious *Falshood* of that *Position*, on which indeed the whole of his *Dissertation* is erected, viz. That in the first Ages of *Christianity*, there was no stated Difference in the *Church*, between *genuine* and *forged* Books, I shall proceed to, what I at first intended, a Vindication of the *Third Pastoral Letter*, from those many and undeserved Reflections, with which the *Inquirer* has endeavoured to asperse both it and the *Author* of it.

The Design of the first *Pastoral Letter* being,
 “to lay before us the Evidences of the Christian
 “Religion, as drawn from the Accounts which the
 “Evangelists give us of our Saviour Christ;” His
 Lordship

¹ *Inquiry*, p. 75.

² *Pastoral Letter*, p. 3.

Lordship was naturally led on, from a general Reconsideration of it, to set forth the Excellency of the *Christian* Institution, in its *several Doctrines*, and their *respective Tendencies*; and upon the whole, to open to us the ¹ *Perfection and Happiness to which it advances human Nature, both in this Life and the next, far beyond any thing that the mere natural Powers of Body and Mind could have discovered, and attained to.*

The Evidences and the Excellency of the *Christian* Institution, being thus fairly proposed to our Acceptance, and warmly pressed upon us, there remained nothing to make the Work perfect in its kind, as a just Representation, and full Defence of the *Christian* Religion, but to shew the *Genuineness* and *Authority* of the Writings of the *New Testament*, which is effectually performed in this *Third Pastoral Letter*.

This was entering into the real Merits of the Cause: For, as his *Lordship* observes, “² If the “ Writings of the *New Testament* be not authentick (*i. e.* either the Writings not genuine, or “ the Authority not divine) the Infidel Scheme “ is well founded: But, on the other hand, if “ they be authentick in both these Respects, “ Christianity stands unshaken and immoveable; “ and all Pretences either that it is not well “ founded, or that it is no more than mere Morality, must fall to the Ground.”

Here then we find a fair, open, and impartial State of that *Question*, which is the most important in *itself*, and in its *Consequences*, that can be offered to the Attention of a *mortal Man*.

Our *Infidels* being thus reduced to a Necessity, either of seeming to admit the Truth of *Christianity*, if they remained silent, or else openly to prove

¹ Pastoral Letter, p. 4.

² Ibid. p. 6.

prove the Writings of the *New Testament* to be not *authentick*; it can be no matter of Surprize to any one (who has in the least observed their manner of *acting* or *writing*) to find, that this last Method was thought most expedient, as what alone could seem to countenance a Cause already driven to a defenceless State.

And to this Purpose the *Inquirer* has taken great Pains to lay together all that his own Thoughts or Reflections could suggest; as also whatever Materials could be had, from Adversaries *ancient* or *modern*. But as it is plain to any one who reads his *Dissertation*, that the present *Defenders* of *Christianity* are as much the Objects of his Displeasure, as the *first Preachers* of it, or as the *Gospel* itself; and that *All* his Civilities and Reasonings are not bestowed on *Christ* or his *Apostles*, or their immediate *Successors*, only (tho' it must be own'd they are bestowed on them with a very warm *Heart*, and a very liberal *Hand*.) I think it most convenient,

First, To examine what is particularly objected to any *Facts* or *Reasonings* contain'd in the *Third Pastoral Letter*, which, we are told, has occasioned this *Inquiry*.

And then proceed to shew, that his *Lordship* has produced the most proper and conclusive *Evidence*, to prove the *canonical Authority* of the *Gospels*; and that he has thereby fully establish'd the Point in Question, and done as much as either his *Promise* or the *Nature* of his Work required.

And, *lastly*, That he has laid before us all *necessary* Arguments to create a reasonable *Assurance*, that the *Gospels* have been faithfully transmitted to the *Christians* of succeeding Ages.

First then, I am to examine what is objected to any *Facts* mentioned, or *Reasonings* alledged in this *Pastoral Letter*.

And here it will be proper to observe, *once for all*, that it is a common Practice with the *Inquirer*, when he cites any Sentence from the *Pastoral Letter*, to endeavour either by the Addition, by the leaving out, or by the Change of some single Word or Phrase, to make his *Adversary* appear trifling, inconsistent, or obscure. Thus when the *Bishop* says, ¹ “ Infidelity can have no possible Refuge but in a downright Disbelief of the *Truth* and *Authority* of these Writings, viz. of the *New Testament*.” The *Inquirer* gives it thus: ² “ He (the *Bishop*) proceeds to shew, what in truth is the Case—That Infidelity can have no other possible Refuge but in Infidelity.”—As if it was not the most usual thing imaginable, with all *Authors*, to personate *Habits*, *Vices*, *Virtues*, &c. and then introduce them, as representing either *Individuals*, or *collective* Numbers, and performing those very Actions, from the customary Practice whereof, those *Habits* first obtain’d their own *intellectual* Existence. And altho’ the *Ear* will not easily admit of the *Inquirer*’s Emendation, that “ *Infidelity* can have no Refuge but in *Infidelity*,” yet what is this to his *Lordship*’s Assertion, That the combined Number of *Infidels* can have no Refuge but in a downright *Disbelief* of such Particulars as are there specified; or, that Persons tainted with *Infidelity*, must be reduced to a Necessity of throwing off the *Mask*, as we plainly see they do.

Again; where the *Letter* says, ³ “ the Persons who were thus prepared by all *ordinary* and
I natural

¹ *Past. Lett.* p. 5. ² *Inquiry*, p. 10. ³ *Past. Lett.* p. 11.

“ *natural Qualifications*, to give an Account of
 “ the Life and Actions of Christ, received also
 “ a *supernatural Assistance* for the Work by his
 “ (*Christ's*) sending the Holy Ghost:” The *In-*
quirer quotes in this manner: “ *And besides these*
natural Qualifications (he calls them) *they were*
supernaturally assisted also.—Where by omitting
 the Word *ordinary*, and not mentioning the *Holy*
Ghost, whom the *Bishop* expressly speaks of as the
 Giver of this *supernatural Assistance*, he attempts
 to cast Obscurity on the Epithet *natural*; which,
 when it is (as in the present Instance) contra-
 distinguishing'd to the *miraculous Gifts* of the *Spirit*
 of God, carries with it a most clear and deter-
 mined Signification. But enough of this: A
 bare Specimen must be sufficient for any *Rea-*
der's Patience. I shall therefore go on to what
 promises us somewhat more material.

And here we find *two Positions* singled out
 (from among the *six* his *Lordship* has laid down
 in Regard to the whole *Canon* of the *New Testa-*
ment.)

First, *That the four Gospels contain a faithful*
and true Account of the Birth, Life, Death, Re-
surrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ. And,

Secondly, *That they have been faithfully trans-*
mitted to the Christians of succeeding Ages. Upon
 this, the *Inquirer* adds, “ These Heads alone
 “ are sufficient; and which, if the *Letter-wri-*
 “ *ter* attends to, and makes good, he will me-
 “ rit the Applause of all Christendom.” And
 that his *Lordship* has attended to, and made good
 these two *Heads*, I persuade myself, will suffici-
 ently appear to any impartial Reader, by what
 follows in the Sequel of this Discourse. But

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† Inquiry, p. 12.

* Ibid. p. 11.

I must first observe, what is objected to the *Facts* and *Reasonings*, by which the *Bishop* gradually leads us on to a *Certainty* of these real Truths. And to begin with what his *Lordship* alledges, in relation to the *Qualifications* of the *Writers*, and the *Subject* of their *History*, it stands thus:

“ When we would be satisfied concerning
 “ the Truth of any History, the two Things
 “ we chiefly enquire after, are, The Knowledge
 “ the Writer had of his Subject, and the Cha-
 “ racter he bore in point of Integrity: the first
 “ to convince us, that he could not be imposed
 “ upon himself; the second, that he had no In-
 “ clination or Design to impose upon others.
 “ Now, that there was such a Person as *Jesus*
 “ of *Nazareth*, who lived at the Time the Gos-
 “ pels speak of, and who made Choice of sever-
 “ al Persons to be his Disciples, are Facts which
 “ the greatest Enemies of Christianity never de-
 “ nied; and if they had denied them, they would
 “ have been effectually confuted by Writers of
 “ undoubted Credit, who lived at the Time,
 “ and in the Age which immediately follow’d.”

Here the *Inquirer* breaks in upon us, for having cited the *Pastoral Letter* to these Words,—“ the Character he bore in point of Integrity,” He says, “ That when the Reader naturally expected he should have fairly entred into some such *Inquiry*; and have proved first, who the *Authors* of the *four Gospels* were, and then have given some tolerable Account of their *Characters*—All he says to it is, *that the greatest Enemies of Christianity*,” &c. And adds, “ I do not find the *Letter-writer* offers at any other Evidence for these historical Facts, than
 “ the

* *Past. Lett.* p. 9.

* *Inquiry*, p. 11, 12.

“ the pretended negative one drawn from the
 “ *Enemies of Christianity not denying them.*”

To this we may reply, that his *Lordship*, as will soon appear, does enter very particularly into the Characters of the Four *Evangelists*; and, that the Knowledge and Integrity of a Writer being supposed, in the Account he gives of another Person's *Life* and *Actions*, it was very natural for the *Reader* to expect some Satisfaction as to the main *Subject* itself, (especially upon the *Inquirer's* Principles, who represents the *Divine Jesus* (as he calls him) ¹ *as living and dying in his own Country without Honour,—and—*² *so obscure a Person* (as he says) *he is on all sides confessed to have been*) and to enquire, if it had been at any Time made a *Question*, Whether there ever was such a Person as *Jesus of Nazareth*; or if the whole of what we call his *History*, was a mere Fiction? When therefore every thing, that could tend to the Dishonour and Destruction of *Christianity*, had been said by its Enemies; and yet the most knowing, and most bitter of them, never denied the *Facts* above mentioned; the Appeal will be found to have much more in it than a bare *negative* Argument. The Silence of an *Adversary*, where it is so much the Concern of his Cause to speak, comes nothing short of a *Confession*; especially when a Proof of the Non-existence of *Jesus* would have put an entire End to the *Christian* Name, and sav'd them the impious Trouble of Blasphemy and Persecution. Neither can it be denied, that (when any *Writer*, either barely mentions, or purposely controverts the *Morals* and *Doctrines* maintain'd by the Followers of such a Sect) these two Positions,—That the *Author* of that Sect did once exist;

¹ Inquiry, p. 13.

² Ibid. p. 15.

exist; and that he had *Disciples*, must of Necessity be allowed by him as the Foundation on which he builds. So that the mention of these two *Facts* was, in the Nature of the Subject, to be premised, before his *Lordship* proceeded to give a more particular Account of the *Authors* of the *Gospels*, and of their Knowledge and Integrity, which he has done in what immediately follows.

“*Jesus* (says the Bishop) *ordained* ² *twelve*
 “ *that they should be with him*; who, with others,
 “ accompanied him *all the* ³ *Time that he went in*
 “ *and out among them*: And what we find parti-
 “ cularly declared by one, might be truly said
 “ by all of them, where-ever they preached,
 “ *That which we have heard, which we have*
 “ *seen with our Eyes, which we have looked upon,*
 “ *and our Hands have handled, declare we unto*
 “ *you*. The Things they recorded as said and
 “ done by Christ, they heard from his own
 “ Mouth, and saw with their own Eyes, and
 “ did not deliver them upon the Report of
 “ others, &c.—That they also ⁴ received a su-
 “ pernatural Assistance for the Work, by his
 “ (Christ’s) sending the Holy Ghost, for this
 “ among other Ends, *that he might bring all*
 “ *Things to their* ⁵ *REMEMBRANCE whatsoever he*
 “ *had said unto them.*”

Then, “as to ⁶ *Mark* and *Luke*, the two other
 “ Evangelists: That it was affirmed by some
 “ of the Ancients, that they were two of the
 “ Seventy Disciples: But however that be (*adds*
 “ *his Lordship*) after our Saviour’s Ascension we
 “ find them expressly mentioned as Fellow-La-
 “ bourers with St. *Paul*, to whom the whole
 “ Gospel

¹ Past. Lett. p. 10. ² Mark iii. 14. ³ Acts i. 21. ⁴ Past.
 Lett. p. 11. ⁵ John xiv. 26. ⁶ Past. Lett. p. 11.

“ Gospel had been immediately revealed from
 “ Heaven; and one of them with St. Peter,
 “ whom Christ chose to be with him in the
 “ whole Course of his Ministry.”

To this the *Inquirer* replies, That ¹it is false of Matthew, that he saw all *Christ's* Miracles from the Beginning; and does not relate to Mark and Luke, two other of the Evangelists. And, then ²as to the ancient Enemies of Christianity, whom the Letter-writer in this, and another Place, lays great Stress on, as having never denied the Gospel Facts, it may with much better Grace be affirmed, that they never believed them; for if they did, Why were they any longer Enemies to Christianity? And, 'tis very certain (I am sorry to say it) there is ³no mention of any such Person as Christ by Name, in any one profane Author, whether Jew or Pagan, at or near Christ's own Time, as the Letter-writer, without any Ground, is pleased to affirm: For as to Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny, Contemporaries under Trajan, these all living in the second Century, at an immense Distance from Palestine, could know nothing of the Gospel History, but from common Report; and what they say either of Christ, or his Followers, is so little for their Credit, that the Letter-writer had much better omitted all mention of these Authors.

We shall have Occasion hereafter to examine more particularly in what Sense, or with what Degree of Truth, St. Matthew may be said to have been with *Christ* from the Beginning; and that it does relate either to St. Mark or St. Luke, the *Bishop* no where affirms. The Authority of the ancient *Enemies of Christianity*, is the present Question: Whether any thing at all can be collected from them; and whether, if collected, it would

¹ Inquiry, p. 12.

² Ibid. p. 13.

³ Ibid. p. 14.

would turn to the *Prejudice* or *Advantage* of our Religion. And 1st, As to the *Gospel Facts*, which the *Bishop* says were never denied by the *Enemies* of *Christianity*, they are the same that are already mentioned, viz. ¹ That *Jesus* lived at such a Time, and gathered *Disciples*; to which he adds, p. 16. that *he* lived in *Judæa*, and suffered *Death* upon the *Cross*. And these his *Lordship* calls the *several Facts* related in the *Gospels*, which receive *Confirmation* from the *Testimony* of other *Historians* both *Jewish* and *Pagan*, who lived at or near the Time.

Now supposing these *Gospel Facts* to be assented to as true by any *Heathen*; yet most evident it is, that these alone cannot have the least Influence toward his Conversion; for hitherto we know nothing of the *moral* Character of the Man, nothing of the Tendency of his *Doctrine*; so that we may with a very good Grace affirm, that the *Enemies* of *Christianity* might believe these *Facts*, and still retain the same Disposition of Mind which they before possessed. If indeed the *Inquirer*, by these *Gospel Facts*, means the whole History of the *Gospel*, what he then says will have the Appearance of Truth: but he must at the same time confess, that the *Bishop* speaks of such particular Facts only, as *abstractedly* consider'd, are by no means qualified to produce any Change in the *Faith* of him who hears them. A *Heathen* might believe these, and yet continue what he was.

From presumptive Arguments, let us go on to *Authorities*, and see whether we can alleviate the *Inquirer's* Sorrow, and prove that *Christ* was mention'd by Name by *unchristian* Authors, at or near his own Time. *Tertullian* is the first
 Author

Author his *Lordship* has ¹ produced, who, speaking of the Crucifixion of *Christ*, and other Particulars relating to him, says, ² All these Things were reported by *Pilate* to *Tiberius Cæsar*. And speaking of the *Christian* Name which first enter'd into the World in the Time of ³ *Tiberius*, —as also of the Persecution under ⁴ *Nero*, he appeals to their own *Knowledge*, and says, Consult your own *Records*. And, —of the *Sun's* being darken'd at the Death of *Christ*, he says, You have what then happen'd to the World in your own ⁵ *Archives*.

Now, that it was the known Usage of Governors, as his *Lordship* here observes, to transmit Accounts to their *Emperors* of the Transactions in their respective Provinces, is allowed on all hands: And from hence we might naturally conclude, if no Author had expressly appeal'd to these Accounts, that *Pilate* was not wanting to his Duty in this Respect. But when *Tertullian*, who, as *Eusebius* remarks, was so ⁶ critically and exactly learned in the *Roman* Law, appeals to their own *Records* and *Archives* for the Truth of those several *Facts* he there mentions, as relating to *Christ*; I think there can remain no Doubt, but that *Heathen* Writers, who lived at that Time, did mention *Christ* by *Name*; unless what is related in the *Acts* and *Monuments* of a Nation, can be supposed to be there recorded by no Author at all. For,

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¹ Past. Lett. p. 17. ² Ea omnia super Christo Pilatus— Cæsari tum Tiberio nunciavit. *Apol.*

³ Tiberius, cujus tempore nomen Christianum in seculum introivit — ⁴ Consulite vestros commentarios; illic reperietis Neronem, &c.

⁵ Eum casum mundi relatum in Archivis vestris habetis, *Apol.*

⁶ τὸ Ῥωμαίων νόμος ἡκριβωκὸς αἰνῆρ. Euf. Eccl. Hist. lib. 2. c. 2.

When a *Writer* of approved Truth and Knowledge relates a Piece of *History*, as taken from such a Record, the *Credibility* of the Fact subsists entirely on the Veracity of the Author of that Record; all that we expect from the Relater of it, is, that he delivers to us either an uncorrupted Copy, or the genuine Sense of it. Let us suppose we knew nothing of any *Roman* Statesman or General, for instance of *Fabius Maximus*, but what we read in *Livy*; yet when that Historian makes mention of Acts *cotemporary* with that *Hero*, from whence he extracted his own Account of him, what an Absurdity would it be to say, there is no mention made of any such Person as *Fabius* by Name, in any one Author at or near his own Time; and from thence insinuate, the whole story of him was a meer Fiction? Whereas in Reality the several Parts of his Life are taken from Writers and Records *coeval* with him: So that if *Livy* or *Tertullian* appeal with Truth to the Acts of the *Roman* People, in support of what they relate in regard to *Christ* or *Fabius*, we must either grant that they were both mentioned by Writers of their own Age, or be driven to maintain this contradictory Position, —that an Extract of a Record, is not an Extract of it.

We must now see how far *Tacitus*, *Suetonius*, and *Pliny* will assist the *Bishop*, and how far what they say, tends either to the real Advantage or Prejudice of *Christianity*. And *Tacitus*, (as is generally allow'd) was born the last Year of *Claudius*, or the first of *Nero*, A. D. 53 or 54; *Pliny* the Year after; *Suetonius* about the beginning of *Vespasian's* Reign, A. D. 69 or 70. So that two of these Authors, who are represented under the Disadvantage of living in the
second

second Century, must be at least *forty-six* Years old, before the *first* ended; and the last about thirty. And *Tacitus*, who gives the fullest Account of the Persecution of the *Christians* under *Nero*, was in all probability an Eye-witness of it, in the Year 64. What he says is to this Purpose: That

“The *Christians* (as the common People call them) were hated for their Wickedness; that the *Author* of that Name was *CHRIST*, who, in the Reign of *Tiberius*, was put to death by the Procurator *Pontius Pilate*—that the detestable Superstition, which was for the present stopped, broke out again not only over *Judea*, the Origin of that Evil, but over the *City*, whither every thing that is wicked and shameful resorts, and is well received; some of them who were first seized making Confessions, by their Discovery a great *Multitude* were convicted.”

It may not be improper here to ask, if no *Heathen* or *Jewish* Author had mentioned *Christ* by name, How the *Historian* comes to be so very exact as to those several *Facts* which the *Bishop* mentions? First, As to his *Name*, that it was *Christ*;—then as to his *Disciples*, that they were called *Christians*;—then as to his *Suffering*, and the *Person* who condemn'd him, *Pontius Pilate*:—as to the *Time* when, that it was in the Reign

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¹ Quos per flagitia inuisos, vulgus CHRISTIANOS appellabat. Auctor nominis ejus CHRISTUS, qui Tiberio imperitante per Procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio affectus erat. Repressaque in præsens exitiabilis superstitio rursus erumpebat, non modo per Judæam, originem ejus mali, sed per urbem etiam quo cuncta undique atrocia aut pudenda confluunt celebranturque. Igitur primo correpti qui fatebantur, deinde indicio eorum multitudo ingens. Tac. l. An. 15. c. 44.

of *Tiberius*.—*Lastly*, that all this was done in the Country of *Judea*. How came this to pass, I say, if no *Heathen* or *Jewish* Historian had mentioned these Facts? For had he consulted any *Christian* Author, he must have found a very different Account of their *Religion* and their *manner of Life*, from what he here gives.

However, we have this Remark to make for the Honour of *Christianity*, That in about *thirty Years* after the Death of *Christ*, (whose *Name*, it seems, was then very well known, as were also the *Facts* his *Lordship* speaks of) there were, even by the Confession of its Enemies, a *vast Number* of *Christian* Converts in the City of *Rome*; and a great *Multitude* of them suffered for their Religion in that Place, which the *Inquirer* sets at such an immense Distance from *Palestine*, that the Inhabitants could know nothing of the *Gospel History*, but from common Report; but forgets to let us know, how *common Report* could have Force enough to establish a Religion contrary to that of the *Empire*, or give Men Courage and Resolution to suffer *Death* for the Profession of it: So that this very Consideration of the immense Distance of *Rome* from *Jerusalem*, which the *Inquirer* heedlessly brings to destroy the Credit of *Christianity*, is a plain Argument that it was assisted by a more than *human* Power.

Suetonius only says, in the Life of *Nero*, the *Christians* were punish'd; a Sect of a new and wicked Superstition. The *Name*, we see, was common; and their Intelligence came from Enemies, who were all comprehended under *Jew* or *Heathen*.

But *Pliny* certainly had his Relation from the best Hands in the 7th of *Trajan*, not above four Years after the Death of *St. John*, and about se-

venty after that of *Christ*, when he acted as *Pro-consul* in *Pontus* and *Bithynia*; the Situation of which Provinces takes off above half from the *Inquirer's* formidable Argument of *Distance*. It would be needless to transcribe the whole of his *Epistle* to the *Emperor*, tho' it is a Record of unquestioned Truth, and gives us a glorious and exalted View of *Christianity*. Here he says,¹ " I
 " asked the *Christians* who were brought before
 " me, Whether they were *Christians* or not?
 " If they confessed, I repeated the Question a
 " second and a third time; if they persevered, I
 " ordered them for Execution.—Those who de-
 " nied themselves to be, or to have been *Chri-*
 " *stians*, followed my Example; invoked the
 " *Gods*, offered Wine and Incense to your Image
 " (which I purposely placed among the Statues
 " of the *Gods*) and blasphemed *Christ*: But those
 " who are truly *Christians*, can never be com-
 " pelled to do any of these Things. Those who
 " had renounced *Christianity*, affirm'd, That the
 " whole of their Fault or Error lay in this, that
 " they were accustomed to come together on a
 " set Day, before it was light, to sing a Hymn
 " among themselves, alternately, to *Christ* as
 " *God*; and to oblige themselves by an Engage-
 " ment, not to any Wickedness,—but that they
 " should not commit Thefts, Robberies, or
 " Adulteries;

¹ Interrogavi ipsos an essent Christiani; confidentes, iterum, ac tertio interrogavi, supplicium minatus. Perseverantes duci jussi—qui negarent se esse Christianos aut fuisse, quum praeunte me, Deos appellarent, & imagini tuæ, quam propter hoc jusseram cum simulacris numinum afferri, thure ac vino supplicarent, præterea maledicerent Christo; quorum nihil cogi posse dicuntur qui revera Christiani sunt.—Alii ab indice nominati se esse Christianos dixerunt & mox negaverunt—affirmabant autem hancce fuisse summam vel culpæ suæ vel erroris, quod essent soliti stato die, &c. *Plin. Epist. l. 10. Epist. 97.*

“ Adulteries; that they should not prove worse
 “ than their word, or refuse to return what was
 “ left in their Trust: after which it was their
 “ Custom to depart, and meet again to take
 “ some Food, which was common and innocent.—On which Account I thought it more
 “ necessary to search out what was the real
 “ Truth, by examining on the Rack two Women who were call’d Servants (or Deaconesses):
 “ when I could find nothing but a froward and
 “ immoderate Superstition.— The Case seems
 “ worthy of your Thoughts, chiefly for the
 “ NUMBER of those who will be brought into
 “ Danger; For many of EVERY AGE, of EVERY
 “ ORDER, and of BOTH SEXES are called, and
 “ will be called into Danger; For not only the
 “ City, but *Villages*, and *Country Places*, are
 “ over-spread with the Infection of this superstition.”

Here we have again a Confession of the same Nature as above, that the *Christians* were exceeding *numerous* in *Pontus* and *Bithynia*; and moreover, that they were many of *every Order*, and consequently many of them of the first *Character* and *Distinction*; which, I think, is somewhat for the Credit of *Christianity*, since *Infidels* so frequently reproach our Religion, as followed only by Slaves and base-born Wretches: But how unjustly, let this learned *Heathen* speak. And to me it seems the *noblest* Character that can be given of any Number or Society of Men, to say, That they rather chose *Death*, than a base Compliance with *Idolatry*; and that they renew’d their Engagements at every Assembly, for the more strict and better Performance of the greatest *moral* and *social* Duties. I am persuaded, had they went no farther,

ther, the *Inquirer* himself, and the whole *Free-thinking School*, would have generously pronounced them Men of the most *just*, the most *noble* Sentiments: But here is their Misfortune, they refus'd to blaspheme *Christ*; nay, they sung a Hymn to him *quasi Deo*; and this at once destroys all their Pretensions to Judgment, Honour, or even common Sense.

So that had the Bishop asserted, what he only ¹ implies, that such a Person as *Christ* by name, was mention'd by *unchristian* Historians, at or near his own Time, it is evident that the *Authors* his *Lordship* there produces, are more than sufficient to support that Assertion; as well as that the Accounts which *Tacitus*, *Pliny*, and *Suetonius* have given of *Christ*, are both of Use and Credit to the *Christian* Cause: And that his *Lordship* has not ² risked the Truth of our sacred Writings (as the *Inquirer* alledges) upon the sole negative Evidence of the Heathens not refuting them. For all that has been hitherto said in regard to the *Heathens*, is barely this, That some *Facts* related in the *Gospel* were never denied by any ancient *Historians* which we know of, but received Confirmation from several of them, whose Works are come safe to our Hands; all which is used but as a concurring Argument, and is of a *positive* Nature.

We must now see whether the *Inquirer* is more fortunate in his Attempts upon that Evidence which his *Lordship* has produced from the Friends of *Christianity*: And whereas the *Bishop* has said,—“That what we find particularly declared by one (Apostle) might be said of them all, *That which we have heard, which we have seen with our Eyes, &c.*” To this the *Inquirer* replies,

¹ *Past. Lett.* p. 16.

² *Inquiry*, p. 16.

replies, ¹*The like of which I believe was never yet so hastily and needlessly asserted before Infidels; it being certainly true that the Evangelical Apostles have, with good Reason, related many Things of their Master, which they neither heard, nor saw, directly said, or done by him; and which indeed could not otherwise happen, unless we shall suppose them fastened to his Side, even as Ribs, never to depart from him.* And having recounted several *Facts and Discourses* contain'd in the eight first, and part of the ninth, Chapters of St. Matthew, he says—*All these are recorded evidently from Hearsay. The Apostle was ²present to none of them himself; they were all done before his Call to the Apostleship; for he was not with Jesus from the beginning, as the Letter-writer heedlessly asserts, if any Credit is to be given to the Series of the Apostle's own History.* And proceeding to recount other *Facts* which, he supposes, St. Matthew must record upon the Report of other Men, he concludes the present Argument thus: ³*Therefore the Letter-writer seems a little rash in making this a Topic of Defence—That the Apostles recorded Nothing but what they saw with their own Eyes, Nothing upon the Report of others; when 'tis so evident, to look no farther, That one half of the Gospel we are treating of, is built upon Tradition only.*

The Charge runs high, and threatens much; the Bishop has asserted what was never so *hastily* and *needlessly* asserted before *Infidels*; and yet most evident it is, that *John* asserted the same above 1600 Years ago, when the World, as it is said, was not entirely free from *Infidels*: Nay, what the Bishop here says, is only an Accommodation

¹ Inquiry, p. 17, 18. ² Ibid. p. 19. ³ Ibid. p. 20.

commodation of St. *John's* own Words to the other *Apostles*; which can be thought to mean neither more nor less in this their Application, than that they were true of them in the same precise Sense in which St. *John* knew them to be true of himself.

Now this Declaration made by St. *John*,—*That which we have heard, that which we have seen, &c.* does not contain any strictly positive or exclusive Assertion, that he delivered NOTHING but what he himself had actually seen the *Word of Life* doing, or heard him speaking: For not to mention the Conversation which *Christ* held with *Nicodemus*, which, from the *Time* of his coming to *Christ*, and the *Danger* that attended it, we may well suppose too private to admit a third Person: What passed between *Christ* and the Woman of *Samaria*, must come to St. *John* by other Means than his own immediate Presence at what was then discoursed.—*Christ's* Disciples were gone away into the City to buy Meat, ch. iv. 8. and ver. 27. when his Disciples return, they marvelled that he talked with the Woman; yet no Man said, *What seekest thou, or why talkest thou with her?* And whether the same Reasons that hindered the *High-Priests* from going into the *Judgment-Hall*, viz. lest they should be defiled, did not influence St. *John* also, I will not take upon me to determine: Or, whether he was present at the Interment made by *Joseph* and *Nicodemus*. But this is certain, that he was not an *Eye-witness* to the Circumstances of his *Resurrection*:—and that what he relates of *Christ's* Appearance and Discourse with *Mary*, ch. xx. from ver. 11 to ver. 17 inclusively, is a Narrative taken from her own Mouth, ver. 18. *Mary Magdalen came and told the Disciples that she had*

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seen the Lord, and that he had spoke these Things unto her ; which, as the Inquirer speaks, is building upon Tradition only.

As therefore *St. John*, who first spoke the Words in Controversy of himself (if his own Practice may be his Interpreter) did not confine them to such a rigorous and peremptory Meaning, as that he had delivered *Nothing*, in its strictest Sense, of the *Life, Preaching, and Actions of Christ*, but what he himself had been an *Eye or Ear-witness* of: So when this Declaration is premised and laid down, as the Ground-work of what follows, the subsequent Application of it to *other Authors*, must be over-ruled and determined by the primary and genuine Interpretation of it. With the same Degree of *Truth and Prudence*, therefore, that *St. John* delivered these Words of himself, and that too when there were *Infidels* in the World, does the *Bishop* extend the Force of them to the other *Apostles*, and among them to *St. Matthew*, and that too, as it seems, before *Infidels*. If the *Disciple* whom *Jesus* loved, acted in this Particular *hastily and needlessly*, the *Bishop*, it must be owned, has copied his Practice in *this*, as well as in *other Parts* of his Care for the Church of *Christ*.

In Reality, the *Inquirer* idly quarrels with a known Form of Words, common to *profane* as well as *christian*, to *classical* as well as *ecclesiastical Writers*; with all whom it is usual to bespeak our Attention and Assent, by representing any History or Account of Things, as given by Authors who were *Eye or Ear-witnesses*, without ever intending to affirm, That they related *NOTHING* but what they themselves actually saw or heard, in its first Form and Appearance. What is it that makes the Expedition of *Cyrus*, and the

the Retreat of the *Greeks*, better received than most other Histories, but that it was writ by *Xenophon*, who was present in the Army in the Ascent of *Cyrus*, without any Post, and who acted as a General in safely bringing off the 10000 *Greeks*? Ask this Question of any Man of Learning, and he presently replies, These Accounts came from a Person who relates what he *heard* and *saw*, who was actually *present* in the midst of these Affairs, who bore no inconsiderable Share in many of them; whose Knowledge therefore cannot be questioned. From the same Topic are *Cæsar's Commentaries* recommended; his own *Eyes* and *Ears* conveyed to him the Truth of those Transactions which he there records. And yet how many *Councils*, *Speeches*, and *Actions*, do we find related by both these Authors, at which it is impossible to conceive them present? unless, with the ingenious *Inquirer*, we will suppose them fastened to the *Side*, even as *Ribs*, of every individual Friend or Enemy, whose Name or Actions are there mentioned.

Look into the ancient Writers of the *Church*, and the *Apostles* are always spoke of as those who preached what they had *seen* and *heard* of the Life and Doctrine of *Christ*, and particularly distinguish'd by the Appellation of *αὐτοῖς*, or *Eye-witnesses*. Nay, *Christ* himself, if we may credit St. *John*, has been as *rash* and *heedless* in his Assertions as the *Letter-writer*; and in truth the *Letter-writer* only repeats what our great *High-Priest* was pleased to speak to them after the Last-Supper; *John* xv. 27. *Ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.* If we are called upon to prove, that those to whom *Christ* then spoke were the *Apo-*
sles,

stles, we must refer to the Context of St. John, to *Matth.* xxvi. 20. *Mark* xiv. 12. *Luke* xxii. 7. if that St. *Matthew* was one of the *Apostles*, we appeal to *Matth.* x. 3. *Mark* iii. 18. *Luke* vi. 15; and of these very Men it is, that *Christ* affirms that they had been with him from the beginning; and thence infers, as the *Bishop* has done after him, that they were duly qualified to bear witness of what he had done and said.

Upon a Review then of the Particulars, we shall find, that in one Article laid to his Charge, the *Bishop* has cited a Passage of *Scripture* as spoke by St. *John*, and applied it to St. *Matthew* and the other *Apostles* in the same Sense, and consequently with the same Degree of Truth, as that *Author* speaks it of himself: And in the other, he has repeated the very Words that *Christ* himself spoke to the *Apostles* and of them; and affirm'd them to be true, which seems to be his greatest Crime. So that if the *Bishop* has, in these Particulars, as the *Inquirer* is pleased to assert, acted *hastily*, *rashly*, and *heedlessly*; he has the Authority of *Christ*, of St. *John*, and of the whole *Christian* Church to comfort him, from its Infancy, to the late accurate ¹ Dr. *Clarke*; who says, "That the *Apostles* could not be imposed on themselves, is evident—They conversed from the beginning with our Saviour himself, they heard with their Ears, and saw with their Eyes; they looked upon, and they handled with their Hands of the Word of Life, as St. *John* expresses it, 1 *John* i. 1."

And what may be of more Weight with some Men, *Heathen Authors* themselves fall into this way of speaking, when they tell us, that *Xenophon* and *Cæsar*, one in the Expedition of *Cyrus*,
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¹ Evidence of Nat. and Rev. Rel. p. 322.

the other in the *Gallic War*, writ what they themselves *saw* and *heard*; which is an indefinite and usual manner of Speech, and is not improperly applied in either Instance, because they were actually present to the *greatest Part* of what is there recorded. But let the *Inquirer* use them as he has the *Bishop*, and add from himself, where he thinks proper, the more precise negative Term NOTHING—but what they saw, &c. or the exclusive Particle ONLY—what they heard, &c. and he may then pronounce them as much in the wrong, and with the same Justice too, as he does the *Bishop*.

I have before repeated what his *Lordship* observed of *St. Mark* and *Luke*,—"That some of the Antients thought they were two of the seventy,—But that they are expressly mentioned as Fellow-Labourers with *St. Paul*, and "one of them with *St. Peter*, &c." To this the *Inquirer* replies as follows:

"The *Letter-writer* says,¹ first, *That it is affirmed by some of the Antients they were two of the Seventy Disciples*, but durst not name those Antients, because he knew he had none to name before the *third Century*, whose Tradition is of no Consequence—*Papias Bishop of Hierapolis* (the most ancient of all the Fathers) says of *Mark* expressly, *That he wrote from his own Memory what he had heard of Peter*—And *St. Luke*, in the *Exordium* of his own Gospel, intimates, *That he wrote not what he himself was an Eye-witness of, but what he understood from others who were*—These are sufficient Testimonies that neither *Mark* nor *Luke* were of the Number of the *Seventy Disciples*, as the *Letter-writer*, from Evidence he durst

" not

¹ Inquiry, p. 20, 21.

“ not name, would insinuate; as also that they
 “ were *traditionary Writers*—What he (the *Bi-*
 “ *shop*) affirms next of these *Evangelists*, is, *that*
 “ *they were both Fellow-Labourers* (he calls them)
 “ of *St. Paul and St. Peter*; which he does upon
 “ no other Ground, than for that he finds the
 “ Names of one *Mark* and one *Luke* in *St. Paul's*
 “ *Epistles*, and also of *Mark* in one of *St. Peter's*:
 “ But these Names being ordinary, the *Questi-*
 “ on still remains, *first*, Whether the *Gospels*
 “ were indeed composed by Persons bearing
 “ those respective Names, which, (say *Heretics*)
 “ the *Titles* by no means ascertain. And, *se-*
 “ *condly*, if so, Whether they were the *identical*
 “ *Persons* mentioned by those *Apostles*; about
 “ which the *Letter-writer* knows *Divines* differ,
 “ and which therefore he ought not to have
 “ concealed from his inquisitive Reader.”

To the first Part of this, we must observe,
 that the *Bishop* does not insist upon *St. Mark* and
St. Luke being two of the seventy Disciples; he
 only says,—that some of the Antients affirm'd it;
 and without giving his own Opinion in the Case,
 adds,—“but however that be”—which is a com-
 mon Form of passing over a Point when we do
 not press it upon the Assent of others. The *In-*
quirer has furnished us indeed with two Eviden-
 ces, *Origen* and *Epiphanius*, at the Bottom of
 the Page, where he is pleased to say, that this
 last *Father* speaks only of *Luke*; and yet I find
 these very Words in *Epiphanius*, according to
 his own Reference, p. 428. Ἐνθὺς ὁ μετὰ τὸν
 ματθαῖον ἀπόλυτος γινόμενος ὁ Μάρκος πρὸ ἀγίου Πέτρου
 ἐν Ῥώμῃ ἐπηρέσθη τὸ Ἐυαγγέλιον ἐκδέδωκε.—ἔπος δὲ οὗτος
 ἐπύχχανεν ἐκ τῆς ἑβδομηκονταδύο, i. e. presently after
Matthew, the care of writing a *Gospel* was com-
 mitted

* Inquiry, p. 21, 22.

mitted to *Mark* a Follower of the *holy Peter*: This Man was one of the *seventy-two*, &c. What Negligence, or what Assurance is this in an *Author* who pretends to Candor and Exactness? But let *Epiphanius* say what he thinks fit, it matters not, for it seems the *Tradition* of the *third Century* is of no Consequence. What a concise Method of Reasoning is this? The Man who is Master of it, can never want the Pleasure of Success in his own Imagination: And yet I could wish that, instead of this, he had seriously applied himself to have answer'd what *Dr. Whitby* produces in his Preface to *St. Luke's Gospel*, in Proof of what the Bishop does not here insist on, *viz. that St. Mark and St. Luke were two of the Seventy.*

I must beg the *Reader* to observe, with what Solemnity the *Inquirer* introduces *Papias Bishop of Hierapolis*, whom, in order to increase our Reverence and Attention, he *falsly* calls *the most ancient of all the Fathers*, and then pronounces what he says a sufficient Testimony: And well it is for this old *Father*, that the *Inquirer* wanted his Assistance; for within twenty-five Pages, he will meet with a very different sort of Treatment. For when it is desired, that what this *Bishop of Hierapolis*, this *most ancient of all the Fathers*, (as he calls him) says in regard to *St. Matthew's Gospel*, may be received as a sufficient Testimony, then the *Inquirer* replies, "This is founded upon Tradition, received from Papias,—a Man (says Eusebius) of a weak Judgment, and a fabulous Author—so that upon this Fool and Knave both (according to Eusebius) doth the whole Tradition depend."

Now

* Inquiry, p. 45.

Now whether *Papias* was really a *Fool* and a *Knave* both, or whether (as there is unquestionable Authority to prove) he was a plain honest Man, of a *narrow way of thinking* (¹ *συνεστὸς τὸν νοῦν*); I should be glad to know by what Art the *Inquirer* will make what he says in relation to St. *Mark* a *sufficient Testimony*, and nothing but a *senseless knavish Story* when St. *Matthew* is concerned. Let us have some *Criterion* whereby we may know what part of his Evidence is to be received, what rejected. But this is one of those *Arcana* of Controversy, by which the *Inquirer* will be ever able to support any thing he pleases to advance.

But to return to St. *Luke*, and what he says of himself: The Cause of his writing was the Practice of other Authors; and, as I conceive, the good Reception they met with who treated the same Subject. His Qualifications for the Work, he thus expresses in general Terms, That he had an exact Knowledge from the ² very first: By what Means he arrived at this perfect Understanding, as he himself has not declared, I think no one can from hence alone *conclude*, that he was not of the Number of the Seventy, or that he was a *traditionary* Writer.

The *Inquirer* graciously allows, that the Names of one *Mark* and one *Luke* are to be found in St. *Paul's* Epistles, and also of *Mark* in one of St. *Peter's*, but thinks this no sufficient Ground for the *Bishop* to assert that they were both *Fellow-Labourers* of St. *Paul* and St. *Peter*; and so far is true, that from the bare mention of one *Mark* or one *Luke*, nothing of moment can be inferred;

¹ Enseb. Eccl. Hist. l. 3. c. 39. ² Tho' if we should render *ἀνωθεν*, cœlitus, from Heaven, the Scripture Use of that Word would justify the Translation.

inferred; much less, what the *Bishop* no where asserts, that they were *both* Fellow-Labourers of *St. Paul* and *St. Peter*. For tho' his *Lordship* falls in with their Opinion, who think the same Person is intended, where *Mark* is mentioned in the Writings of *St. Paul* and *St. Peter*; and therefore, on this Hypothesis, affirms, that *Mark* and *Luke* were with *St. Paul*; yet he expressly adds, *and one of them (Mark) with St. Peter*.

Now that *Mark*, under one of these Characters, if not under both (and either of them is equally conclusive as to the *Authority* of the History, which is the only Point in view) did write the *Gospel* we have under his Name, is a Truth universally allow'd by *All Church-Writers*. His own *Sandius* says, The following Books of the *New Testament* have been always held 'canonical by the *Church*, the Four *Gospels*, viz. of *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, *John*—And that those of *St. Mark* and *St. Luke* were received upon the Authority of *St. Peter* and *St. Paul*, Mr. *Dodwell* (than whom no Man had a clearer View of Antiquity) assures us: ² “—And the other *Gospels* “ (says he) writ by the holy Disciples *Mark* and “ *Luke*, were recommended to the Church in “ the Name of the *Apostles*, whose Disciples “ they were, viz. of the holy *Peter* and *Paul*.” The *Bishop* has here united the Accounts we have of a Person called *Mark* in the *Acts* and in the *Epistles*, and made them center in the same Individual; and if these Accounts should in Reality

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¹ Pro canonicis N. T. libris semper ab ecclesia habiti sunt sequentes: Evangelia 4, scil. Matthæi, Marci, Lucæ, Johannis. *Hist. Eccl.* p. 3.

²—Alia illa conscripta quidem a discipulis S. S. Marco & Luca, Apostolorum autem quorum illi fuerant discipuli, S. S. Petri nimirum & Pauli, nomine ecclesiæ commendata. *Præf. in Dissert. in Iren.* §. 10.

lity belong to two Persons, which yet is far enough from being certain; Infidelity would reap no Advantage from it: For all those Authors who suppose different Men to be mark'd out in these Accounts, do yet maintain, with the greatest Unanimity, that St. *Mark* the *Evangelist* is included and specially design'd in one part of these Descriptions; which the *Bishop*, and before him, many ancient and modern Authors have conceived to belong to *one Person only*. For,

As *Cotelerius*, whom the *Inquirer* mentions in his Notes as a Favourer of the last Opinion, verily candidly observes,—¹“ The *Apostle*, Col. iv. 10, 11. among his Assistants names *Mark* the “ Cousin of *Barnabas*: The *Evangelist*, (says he) “ if we credit the first Dialogue concerning the “ true Faith in God, not far from the Beginning, among *Origen's* Works, or *Victor Antiochenus*, in the beginning of his Commentaries on *Mark*; or *Oecumenius* and *Theophylact* upon the *Acts* of the *Apostles*; or *Euthymius* in the Proem of the *Gospel* according to “ *Mark* and *Haymon*, upon Col. iv. 11. The “ same *Apostle* writes, Phil. 24. *Marcus*, *Aristarchus*,

¹ Apostolus Colof. iv. 10, 11. inter adjutores suos Marcum consobrinum Barnabæ nominat, Evangelistam, si credimus dialogo primo de recta in Deum fide, non procul ab initio, apud Origenem; Victori Antiocheno initio commentariorum in Marcum, Oecumenio & Theophylacto ad Acta Apostolorum; Euthymio in procemio Evangelii secundum Marcum, & Haymoni ad Colof. iv. 10. Ab eodem Apostolo Philem. 24. scribitur Μάρκος, Ἀριστάρχος, Δημᾱς, Λυκάς, οἱ συνεργοί μου. Qui Marcus ex interpretatione Hieronymi, ac post eum Haymonis, Evangelii conditor est. Et vero de Luca consentiunt OMNES quod Pauli fuerit discipulus, comes & coadjutor, quodque Lucæ Evangelium præcipue ad Paulum Apostolum debeat referri. Coteler. Not. in Constit. Apostol. l. 2. c. 57.

“ *starchus, Demas, Lucas*, my Fellow-Labourers; which *Mark*, according to the Interpretation of *St. Jerome*, and after him of *Haymon*, is the Author of the *Gospel*.—And, indeed of *Luke*, ALL agree that he was the Disciple of *Paul*, and that the *Gospel of Luke* should be principally attributed to the *Apostle Paul*.”

So that according to *Cotelerius*, who is one of the *Inquirer's* own Evidence, we find that it has been a Question among *Divines*, Whether there was *one* or *two* Persons mentioned by the Name of *Mark*; as also that *many* great and ancient Authors have been in the *Bishop's* way of thinking. We are also certain,—that this general Position has been always peaceably received; that *Mark*, who is mentioned in the *New Testament*, was Author of the *Gospel*; which is the *Substance* of what his *Lordship* here contends for; and till that can be disproved, his Arguments remain in their full Strength. And as for *St. Luke*, what is here said of him, is agreed to by ALL.

Upon the whole, I know not how to give, or where to find, so good an Account of these two *Evangelists*, and their *Gospels*, as his *Lordship* has given us; to which I shall as candidly subjoin what the *Inquirer* has objected to it.

“ The 'Accounts (*says the Bishop*) which the Antients give of those two *Gospels* and the Writers of them, are as follows: ^a *Irenæus* says, That *Mark*, the Disciple and Interpreter of *Peter*, committed those Things to Writing which had been related to him by *Peter*, and that *Luke*, the Companion of *Paul*, recorded in a Book the *Gospel* which *Paul* preached.

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“ And

¹ *Past. Lett.* p. 12, 13.

² *Iren. l. 3. c. 1.*

“ And elsewhere ¹ he says of St. *Luke*, that he
 “ was an inseparable Companion of St. *Paul*,
 “ and his Fellow-Labourer in the Gospel. ² *Tertullian* says, That the Gospel which *Mark* pub-
 “ lished, is affirmed to be *Peter's*, whose *Inter-*
 “ *preter* he was; [as writing in *Greek* what he
 “ heard St. *Peter* deliver to the *Jews* in their
 “ own Language] and that which is drawn up
 “ by *Luke* is ascribed to *Paul*. *Eusebius* relates,
 “ upon the Authority of more ancient Writers,
 “ ³ That the Christians at *Rome* prevailed with
 “ *Mark* to set down in Writing the Doctrine
 “ which *Peter* had preached; and that after-
 “ wards *Peter* confirmed it, and authorized it to
 “ be publickly read in their Assemblies. And else-
 “ where, from *Origen*, ⁴ The second Gospel is that
 “ of *Mark*, who set it down as it was deliver'd to
 “ him by *Peter*; and the third, that of *Luke*,
 “ which is commended by St. *Paul*. To these
 “ we must add, what the same *Eusebius* says, as
 “ handed down by Tradition to his Time, ⁵ That
 “ St. *John* approved the other three Gospels,
 “ and gave his Testimony to the Truth of them.
 “ And ⁶ That Copies of these holy Gospels were
 “ with great Zeal convey'd to remote Countries
 “ by those who succeeded the Apostles in the
 “ Propagation of the Christian Faith: ⁷ And they
 “ were read in the publick Assemblies, and re-
 “ ceived as the *Foundation* of that Faith, with-
 “ out the least Mark of Distinction in Point of
 “ *Authority*.”

This may seem rather long for a Quotation,
 but the Evidence is clear, full, and excellently
 put

¹ *Iren.* l. 3. c. 14.

² *Tert. contra Marcion*, l. 4. c. 5.

³ *Euseb.* l. 2. c. 15.

⁴ *Ibid.* l. 6. c. 25.

⁵ *Ibid.* l. 3.

c. 24.

⁶ *Ibid.* c. 37.

⁷ *Iust. Mart. Apol.* 2. *Iren.*

l. 3. c. 11, 12.

put together; each Part gives and receives mutual Light and Strength. And that the *Inquirer* may not complain, what he replies shall be set down also at its full Length. It stands thus:

“The Gentleman proceeds to give some Account, and to establish the *canonical Authority* of their two *Gospels*, which he endeavours at by raking into the *Fathers*, and proving by some few Citations from them, not that those *Gospels* were composed by *immediate Inspiration*, which it was his Business to do—But first, *That Mark wrote down his Gospel, as it was preach'd by Peter*; and, secondly, *That Luke composed his out of the Sermons of Paul*. Of which Facts, tho' we are at no manner of Certainty, yet the *Letter-writer* concludes with the same Assurance, as if he had given us the most convincing Proofs of all he contends for.—*Thus* (says he) *stands the Evidence of the Truth of the Gospel-History, with regard to the exact Knowledge the Writers had of their Subject*; tho' I cannot but observe too, how soon he has chang'd his Note.—Just now he would have it believed *Mark and Luke* were of the inspired Disciples of *Jesus*, *Workers of Miracles, and to have wrote of their own Knowledge and Experience*; but now he is content, if you will but admit them to be the *Pedisequi* of *Peter and Paul*, and to have derived their Knowledge from them. He has indeed the Enemy at all Advantage.—*Mark and Luke*, it seems, were either *inspired* themselves, or they were taught by those that were; and this is his way of defending the *Divine Authority* of the *New Testament*,”

I might

¹ Inquiry, p. 22.

I might now appeal to any one who is at all conversant in *Ecclesiastical History*, Whether the Accounts here suggested to us, are not the most material ones that can be collected from the *first Church-Writers*? If then, that Evidence which the *Bishop* thus produces, cannot be overthrown, either by shewing that these *Authors* do not really say what his *Lordship* makes them speak; or that they themselves could know nothing of the Matter; or that if they did, they would not communicate it to others, as the Truth required: If none of these Things can be made out (and we see nothing like it is attempted) all the Rules of just Reasoning will oblige us to conclude, that the *Authority* of these *Gospels* is sufficiently supported.

Who can easily divine what Proofs will satisfy the *Inquirer*? If the *Christian Cause* would gain any countenance from Authors of the *third Century*, he pronounces very dogmatically, — *their Tradition is of no Consequence*. If we alledge Writers of greater *Antiquity*, that is called *raking into the Fathers*; and (as we see) not thought fit to deserve a particular Answer. And as to the *Bishop's* changing his Subject, or *his Note*, as the *Inquirer* calls it, the Accusation is intirely false, it being no part of his Business to prove that *St. Mark* and *St. Luke* writ by immediate Inspiration: For, as we have before observed, his *Lordship's* Arguments do not ground themselves upon a Supposition of their being two of the *Seventy*. But that they received a true and perfect Knowledge of all Things necessary from *St. Peter* and *St. Paul* which was a real part of his Business, the *Bishop* has fully and distinctly proved: To which the *Inquirer* thinks it a sufficient Answer to say, what might as effectually

destroy the Credit of any Position whatever, of these Facts we are at no manner of Certainty. He might as well have spoke out, and told us, *Irenæus*, *Tertullian*, *Eusebius*, *Justin*, and *Origen*, do indeed say what the *Letter-writer* alledges, but a *Free-thinker* never believes a single word of what those *old Dotards* write. As to what he is pleased to assert of *St. Mark's Gospel* in a Remark at the bottom of the Page, it is introduced in too loose and general a manner of speaking, to admit of any particular Consideration; viz. ¹ — “some say—others say—others—the
“most judicious, both ancient and modern say
“—” for since he quotes no *Author* by his *Name*, it is not easy to collect whether he has any other View than to amuse his *Reader* with this loose way of talking, and thereby draw off his Attention from what the *Bishop* has here laid before us in so judicious and conclusive a Method. A Writer who would build upon *Authorities*, must specify the *Originals* from whence he takes them, or else his *Argument* and his *Credit* too will greatly sink in the Judgment of an *understanding Reader*.

But what follows in relation to *St. Luke* being more particular, I will consider how far it is true: It runs thus, ² “As to *Luke*, he himself tells
“us, That he wrote what he received from
“those who from the beginning were *Eye-witnesses*
“of the *Word*; which cannot be understood of
“*Paul*. Anonym.” This anonymous Commentator, I suppose, refers to the Proem of *St. Luke's Gospel*; where the *Evangelist* having premised that many had endeavoured to give an Account of Things believed among us (ἐν ἡμῖν) in the same manner as those who were *Eye-witnesses* and *Min-*

¹ Inquiry, p. 22.

² Ibid.

nisters of the *Word* delivered to (ἡμῖν) us, where the same collective Body of Christians is intended in both Places, he then proceeds to speak of himself in the singular Number ; it seemed good even unto me, (καὶ ἐγώ) to write, &c. without specifying in what particular manner he came by his Knowledge. All St. *Luke* asserts, as I before observed, is this, That those *Historians* endeavoured to follow the *Tradition* of the *Eye-witnesses*, &c. but of *himself* he only says in general, that he had a perfect *Knowledge* of his Subject : So that nothing is to be inferred from hence, which can in the least affect what the *Bishop*, and before him the *Fathers* have asserted.

I cannot find any Place in this *Pastoral Letter*, where the *Bishop* desires us to believe that *Mark* and *Luke* were of the *inspired Disciples*, or that they wrote of their own *Knowledge* and *Experience*. Those indeed who insist upon their being two of the *Seventy*, desire us to believe these Things ; but, as I must again repeat, his *Lordship* does but barely mention that Hypothesis, and does not pretend to build upon it : So that I imagine he will be well content, if they be admitted as the *Pedissequi* (how scornful soever that Appellation may be thought) of (plain) *Peter* and *Paul* ; and if so, I think he has the *Enemy* at as much Advantage as he desires to have him, *i. e.* confessing the *Truth* of what he here maintains.

For it being allow'd that St. *Mark* and St. *Luke*, who were the Companions of St. *Peter* and St. *Paul*, did write the *Gospels* which go under their Name, it will be found a very proper way of defending the *Authority* of these, or any other single Book of the *New Testament*, if we can with *Truth* (as in the present Case) affirm—
that

hat the *Authors* of them were either immediately *inspired* themselves, or that they were instructed, as far as was necessary to establish the Truth of the *Books* in question, by those who were so *inspired*. In both Cases the *divine* Sanction proceeds from *one* and the *same* Spirit.

I could wish the *Reader* would here observe, what a concise manner of Reasoning the *Inquirer* uses in confuting the Arguments of his Adversary:—If the *Bishop* says *some Gospel Facts* were not denied by the *Heathens*, then he is charged “¹ with risking the Truth of our *sacred Writings*, upon the sole negative Evidence of “ the *Heathens* not refuting them; than which “ nothing can be more ridiculous or yet dangerous.”—’Tho’ I think no one but the *Inquirer* ever imagined, that the *Bishop* intended to prove our *Gospels sacred*, because *some Facts* there recorded are not deny’d by *Heathens*.—No! but something must be said; or a raw Disciple, out of mere Respect to the *Heathen* World, and their not denying of it, might be induced to believe,—that there really was a Person named *Christ*,—who lived in *Judæa*,—gathered *Disciples*,—and suffered by the Sentence of *Pontius Pilate*, in the Reign of *Tiberius*;—and from thence infer,—that every thing which *Christians* say is not chimerical and imaginary.

Again; if his *Lordship* builds upon what the *Heathen Historians* have actually related, why then these very *Authors*, who at other Times are Men of unquestionable Authority, “² could know “ nothing of the *Gospel History* but from common Report.” If the *Bishop* turns from them, and appeals to Church-Writers, Why then, says the *Inquirer*, “³ there is nothing more ridiculous
G “ than

¹ Inquiry, p. 16.

² Ibid. p. 14.

³ Ibid. p. 26.

“ than to fly for Help to the *Fathers*, and cite
 “ them, forsooth, as good Evidence for the
 “ *Word of God* against *Infidels*.”—

This looks indeed as if the *Inquirer* was in good earnest; and most certainly he is; for if *Christianity* can receive no countenance from the *Silence*, if no Support from the *Confession* of her *Enemies*; if no Confirmation from *Christian Acts*, *Monuments*, and *Records*; if neither those who are against us, nor those who are for us, may be heard in our Defence, the Matter is then just as the *Inquirer* would have it, and the Religion of *Christ* must pass among Men for mere *Fable* and *Delusion*.

But to return. Upon a Review of what has been alledged on both Sides, in regard to the present Argument, we must acknowledge that the *Bishop* has given us the most convincing Proofs of all he contends for (or why has not the *Inquirer* falsify'd at least some one single Evidence in particular?) and that therefore his *Lordship* has Reason to conclude with Assurance,—¹“ Thus
 “ stands the Evidence of the Truth of the
 “ Gospel-History, with regard to the exact
 “ Knowledge the Writers had of their Sub-
 “ ject; which shews they could not be im-
 “ posed upon themselves.”

The second thing to be looked after in the Character of an *Historian*, is this, ²That he had no Inclination or Design to impose upon others. And to this Purpose his *Lordship* says, ³“ So far
 “ were the Persons from being artful or de-
 “ signing Men, that they were reproached by
 “ the Enemies of Christianity as rude and mean,
 “ simple and illiterate; and so far were they
 “ from having any worldly Views of Profit, or
 “ Pleasure,

¹ Past. Lett. p. 13. ² Ibid. p. 9. ³ Ibid. p. 13, 14.

“ Pleasure, or Honour, after they set out on
 “ the Work of propagating the Gospel; that
 “ Persecution, Affliction, and Reproach, were
 “ almost the constant Attendants of the Propa-
 “ gators of it. As to the *Time*, they wrote
 “ and publish’d their Gospels while the Mat-
 “ ters were fresh in memory, and while many
 “ Persons were living who wanted not Inclina-
 “ tion to detect them, if they could have
 “ been convicted of Falshood. And as to
 “ their *Manner* of writing, it is plain, open,
 “ and undisguised, free from all Appearance of
 “ Art or Contrivance, and carries in it this
 “ signal Testimony of Truth and Impartiality,
 “ That they freely confess and record the Fail-
 “ ings and Weaknesses of themselves and their
 “ Brethren. If we consider the *Facts* contain-
 “ ed in the Gospel-History, and the Tendency
 “ of them, they are such as overthrow the Re-
 “ ligion both of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, and there-
 “ fore could not escape the severest Scrutiny.
 “ And if we consider the *Numbers* who after-
 “ wards undertook to attest and publish those
 “ Facts, it is incredible, that if they were not
 “ true, no one of them should be prevailed
 “ with, either by Hope or Fear, to discover
 “ the Imposture; and next to impossible to
 “ suppose, that all of them should submit to
 “ the severest Trials, and many of them to
 “ Death itself, rather than deny them.—These
 “ are the Evidences (says his *Lordship*) that the
 “ Evangelists had no Intention or Desire to de-
 “ ceive others.”—And

That I may deal with the *Inquirer* as fairly as
 I have with the *Bishop*, I shall here set down his
 Objections at large in his own Words.

“ Now, first, (says he) That the Writers of
 “ the New Testament were *rude* and *mean*,
 “ *simple* and *illiterate*; which the *Letter-writer*,
 “ with most Divines, affects to acknowledge:
 “ This, one would think, is so far from being
 “ part of their Commendation, as ’tis common-
 “ ly made, that *Infidels*, I am afraid, will stick
 “ to it, that ’tis the greatest Objection possible
 “ to their being *Authors*; and therefore if they
 “ were indeed *rude* and *mean*, *simple* and *illite-*
 “ *rate*, the Reproach will be found to be but
 “ too well grounded.

“ But after all, where is the Necessity of *di-*
 “ *vulging* again and again the *Weaknesses* and
 “ *Incompetencies* of the first *Doctors of Christia-*
 “ *nity*? Or, where the *Piety* or *Attachment*
 “ shewn to our excellent *Religion*, to be thus
 “ continually aspersing its *Founders*—and fixing
 “ to their Persons the base Characters of *Fools*
 “ and *Beggars*? Is not this to expose it deser-
 “ vedly to the Scorn of *Unbelievers*—and to the
 “ very same home Objection, *Christians* usually
 “ make to *Mahometism*, viz. *That it had none*
 “ *but an illiterate Blockhead for its Author*?”

“ Then, secondly, *That the Apostles had no world-*
 “ *ly View*: Tho’ ’tis a Truth we are all satisfy’d
 “ in, yet it cannot be inferr’d, as the *Letter-*
 “ *writer* injuriously puts it, *from their being con-*
 “ *stantly persecuted and reproached*, but the con-
 “ trary, *Shame and Punishment* frequently at-
 “ tending a too eager Pursuit after the *World*,
 “ never a Contempt of it.—But neither does
 “ the *Letter-writer* know the *Apostles were actu-*
 “ *ally reproached and persecuted* after they had left
 “ their own Country; and it seems to me an ugly
 “ Reflection upon their *Manners*, and the *Do-*
 “ *ctrines*

“ *Elrines* they publish’d, to say they were:—
 “ For (as *St. Peter* says) if they were *Followers*
 “ of that which was good, who could harm
 “ them?”

And again, to the same purpose, says the *Inquirer*,¹ “ It appears then, according to *Father Irenæus* (a Witness after the *Letter-writer’s* own heart) that *St. Matthew’s Gospel*, the first of the four, was not wrote ’till at least *sixty-four or sixty-five Years* after our Saviour’s *Nativity*, and above *thirty Years* after his *Crucifixion*; notwithstanding the *Letter-writer* expressly maintains, *That not only this, but all the other Gospels, were wrote and publish’d too while the Matters were fresh in Memory, and while many Persons were living who wanted not Inclination to detect the Evangelists, if they could have been convicted of Falshood; and tho’ he knows too that one of the Gospels (even that according to John) was not composed till near seventy Years after our Saviour’s Decease, and an hundred Years after his Nativity: And farther also, that the sacred Writings of the New Testament could not be obtained by the Heathens but thro’ Force and Stealth for above two hundred Years longer.*” Thus far the *Inquirer*, who, in support of this last Assertion, mistakes and misrepresents the known Story, and Censure of those called *Traditors*, in a Note at the Foot of the Page.

Let us now examine how far the *Pastoral Letter* is concern’d in what is here objected: And, first, we might say, that tho’ the *Bishop*, in order to shew that the *Evangelists* were not artful or designing Men, produces the Testimony of their Adversaries who reproached them as *rude and mean,*

¹ *Inquiry*, p. 37, 38.

mean, &c. Yet no one can from hence collect that his *Lordship* has altogether the same Idea of them, in respect to these Qualities, as their Enemies had; but only allows the Truth of what they said, in such a Sense as might remove all just Imputation of evil *Art* and wicked *Design* from their Characters and Proceedings. “But “*Infidels*, the *Inquirer* says, will stick to it, “that it is the greatest Objection possible to “their being *Authors*.”—And, I grant, that *Infidels* who resolve obstinately to continue such, may possibly reason in this manner.—But we, who are *Christians*, know that *our Faith does not stand in the Wisdom of Men, but in the Power of God*.¹ We consider also *who* it is, that said to his *Apostles*,—*The Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in my Name, he shall teach you all Things, and bring all Things to your REMEMBRANCE, whatsoever I have said unto you*.² And the Objection lies much stronger against their speaking with Tongues, healing the Sick, casting out Devils, or any other *miraculous* Performances, which are well known to have been exercised by them, and yet by all allowed to exceed the Power of any Faculties planted in their Constitution by the Hand of Nature. Since therefore we have in *Fact* proved that they were *Authors*, and since it is agreed on *both Sides*, that the Abilities born with them, or acquired in the way of Education, were not sufficient for that Purpose, it must follow, that they writ under the Guidance and Direction of some *superior Agent*, and the Contents of what they writ, plainly shew, that this *Agent* was a Patron of *Goodness*, a Friend to *Virtue* and true *Religion*, and consequently

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 5.² John xiv. 26.

quently proceeding from the Almighty Father of *Truth* and *Goodness*.

The *Inquirer* leads us on from hence to consider, “ whether they had any worldly Views in “ propagating the *Gospel*.” And tho’ he is graciously pleased to tell us, that *we are all satisfied they had not*, yet he will not allow any one single Reason which the *Bishop* has alledged to prove it. And, first, “ It cannot be inferr’d, as “ the *Letter-writer* injuriously puts it from their “ being ¹ constantly reproached and persecuted, “ but the contrary, &c.”

Here the *Inquirer* endeavours to draw us off from what is called a *definite* Question, in which particular Circumstances of *Persons*, their *Morals*, *Doctrines*, &c. are jointly included, to the Consideration of one that is *general* and *universal*; which is downright *Sophistry*. And having premised that *Shame* and *Contempt* frequently attend a too eager Pursuit after the World (which we may safely enough allow) he adds, never a Contempt of it,—from whence we are desired to infer, that *since* the *Apostles* did meet with *Shame* and *Punishment*, they did not *contemn* the World: And, moreover, that we cannot conclude, as the *Bishop* would have us do, from this Topic, that they had no *worldly Views*.

The Point then particularly before us, is the Case of the *Apostles*, whose sole Business it was to be active and persevering in the Work of the *Gospel*; which, as his *Lordship* observes, was *to overthrow the Religion both of Jews and Gentiles, and therefore could not escape the severest Scrutiny*. And the *Inquirer* himself allows, that ² *Matthew* (and Parity of Reason includes the other *Apostles*)
had

¹ The *Pastoral Letter* reads—Persecution, &c. were almost the constant— ² *Past. Lett.* p. 14. ³ *Inquiry*, p. 61.

had no reason to expect a very favourable Hearing from a bigotted ignorant World: Their Lord and Master also had sufficiently foretold what Reception they were like to find in his Service. Now had not these *Apostles* entertain'd in their Minds a settled *Contempt* of this World, we cannot reasonably imagine they would ever have begun, much less that they should continue to oppose their new Doctrines to the establish'd Notions of Mankind; when both from the Nature of the Enterprize, and the *Predictions* of their Master, they were to hope for little but outward Troubles and Persecutions.

If therefore it be allowed (what the next Page will more fully prove) that Reproach and Persecution did *almost* constantly attend the *Apostles* in the Discharge of their Ministry; and if a steady Perseverance under these Evils, is found destructive of that *Profit*, *Pleasure*, and *Honour* which Men expect from their *worldly Views*, it must come to the *Bishop's* Conclusion, founded in the *Nature* of Things, "That the injurious Treatment which the *Apostles* met with in propagating the *Gospel*, is a sure Argument that they did not act upon *secular* Motives." And if what *St. Paul* says of *Demas* proves true, That the *Love* of this *present World* was the Reason why he forsook him, we must grant, that had the same Cause been equally predominant in the Minds of others who first preached the *Gospel*, it would have produced the same *Effects*: But since they suffered Things inconsistent with this *Principle* of Action, his *Lordship* is undoubtedly in the right to affirm, that they were not directed by it.

And indeed the *Inquirer* seems to apprehend Danger from this Quarter, when he questions the *Truth* of their suffering as an *historical Fact*; and says, *he* (the Bishop) *does not know they were* actually reproached and persecuted *after they left their own Country*. The Arguments we have already taken from the *Nature* of Things, and the *Prophecies* of *Christ*, as to the Certainty of the Facts, might be thought sufficient: But since this perhaps will not be called *Knowledge*, *History* must acquaint us also with the actual Completion. And since the *Inquirer* does not dispute the Truth of the Assertion, while they remained in their own Country, it is now incumbent on him, either to prove that *Antioch*, *Acts* c. xiii. 14. *Iconium*, c. xiv. 1. *Lystra*, verse 6. *Philippi*, c. xvi. 12, &c. *Thessalonica*, c. xvii. 1. *Corinth*, c. xviii. *Ephesus*, c. xix. are all Ports of *Judea*; or that the Sufferings which some of the *Apostles* are said to have undergone in those Places, are mere fabulous idle *Stories*. Besides, all *Ecclesiastical* Writers, altho' they are not very exact in the Particulars, are *unanimous* in this, That the *Apostles*, in general, did suffer great *Afflictions* for the sake of the *Gospel*, and laid down their Lives for the *Testimony* of *Jesus*, as *Clemens Romanus*, an Author of undoubted Credit, and who lived at the same Time, expressly relates of *St. Peter* and *St. Paul*. *Peter*, says he, sustained not one, or two, but *many* Labours; and suffering *Martyrdom*, went to the Place of Glory that was due to him. *Paul* carried Chains seven times, was scourged, was stoned, preached in

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ἰ Πέτρος ἔχ' ἕνα, ἐν δὲ δύο, ἀλλὰ πλείονας ὑπέμεινεν πόνους, καὶ ἔτι μαρτυρήσας, κτλ. Παῦλος ἐπ' αἰκίς δεσμὰ φορέσας—μαρτυρήσας ἀπὸ πλῆθους τοῦ κόσμου, ὑπομονῆς γὰρ ὄντος—ἐμὲς ὑπογραμμός, 1 Ep. ad Corinth. 5.

the *East* and *West*, taught the *whole World* Justice—and suffering *Martyrdom*, left the *World*, and went into the *holy Place*, being the greatest Example of *Patience*.

But if the *Bishop* has said the Truth, the *Inquirer* will take what care he can that the *Christian* Cause shall have no Advantage from it: For it seems to him “an ugly Reflection on their “Manners, and the Doctrines they published, “to say they were reproached, &c.” Let these Reflections seem as *ugly* as they will, it is our Business to defend the *Truth* without Addition or Diminution. And we have already proved from the Tendency of their Mission, supported by *historical* Facts, that the strong Attachment of the *Heathen* World to *Idolatry*, and the Prepossession of the *Jews* in favour of the Law of *Moses*, were the *real Causes* of all the evil Treatment they received: so that whatever is *ugly*, must be laid upon the Authors of their *Persecution*, and on them alone. And

Yet somewhat follows worse than all this; the *Inquirer* has made a very fortunate Discovery even in the Books call'd *canonical*; *St. Peter* has said, *Who is he that will harm you, if you be followers of that which is good?* From whence we are desired to infer, that if any one suffers Disgrace, Reproach, or Persecution from his Fellow-Creatures, which we affirm to be the Case of the *Apostles*, he must of Necessity be a *Follower of that which is evil*. An Inference contradictory to every Man's Observation and Knowledge! A Man who looks on present Pain, proceeding from any Cause whatever (which possibly may be some Men's Case) as *Harm* or *Unhappiness*, will readily fall in with this extraordinary Interpretation: But *St. Peter*, who had
endured

endured so many Labours for the Gospel, was of a contrary Opinion, and declares, That suffering in a good Cause was so far from harming them, that it was a certain Proof of their being in favour with Christ: If, says he in the next Verse, ye suffer for Righteousness sake, happy are ye.

From the moral Characters and particular Views of the Apostles, the Inquirer proceeds to oppose what the Bishop has said as to the Time when the Gospels were wrote. I have above set down the Passages relating to this Affair at large, and shall not here take notice of that great Difference of Ideas which regularly follows the Bishop's Representation of the Facts, and that which the Inquirer gives us; nor will I insist upon what is sufficient to decide the Cause in his Lordship's Favour, viz. that it is a common and received Practice among all Authors, in a brief Recapitulation of what they have more explicitly handled in the foregoing Pages, to speak that of the whole, in a complex manner, which is more particularly true of the major part. But I will fairly enter into the Question, Whether it may not be affirm'd, with great Truth and Propriety of Language, that St. John writ his Gospel while Matters were fresh in Memory, and many Persons living, &c.

St. John, he says, "writ his Gospel near Seventy Years after the Death of Christ." What he here calls near Seventy Years, is, at the most, between sixty-four and sixty-five. For if Cave, Echard, and (as Echard says) the best Chronologers are right, St. John writ his Gospel A. D. 97. and Christ was crucified A. D. 33. However, in complaisance to our Author, who thinks it beneath his Care to be over exact in Calculation, let us pass by the difference of five or six Years,

and then suppose an *Historian* of our own Nation, aged about an 100 Years, a Man of good Sense, perfect in Memory and Understanding, bred up in the Court and Confidence of *Charles the First*, writing an Account of his *Sufferings* and *Death* (and the subsequent *Revolutions* in the State of these Kingdoms) in the Year 1718, (which Period will be found to contain much the same distance of *Time*) Will the *Inquirer* say, that there were no Men *living* who could *detect* our *Historian* if he recorded *Falshoods*? And by what Methods must they proceed in their Endeavours to *detect* him? None certainly so ready and effectual, as by appealing to the Knowledge of many Men then *living*, who were able to give a perfect Account of the most remarkable Occurrences of those Times, either from the part they *themselves* bore in them, or from what was kept *fresh in Memory* by the Relations and Writings of other Men *equally* engaged. And to prove that many who had seen *Christ* in the Flesh, were *living* after *St. John* writ his *Gospel*, as well as that there were many *Heathens* about those Times of as great or greater Ages, I shall set down this Remark from *Echard*. “In the following Year, *A. D.* 74, *Vespasian* join'd his Son *Titus* with him in the quality of a *Censor*, and they two made the last publick *Census* or numbering of the *Roman* Citizens that was ever known; in which *Pliny* observes that several Persons were found of an extraordinary Age, particularly of 110, of 120, of 130, of 140, and two of 150 Years; which may make us the less wonder at the Age of many of the Ecclesiasticks and Saints of this Time, particularly of *St. John*, *St. Ignatius*, *Simeon*, *Quadratus*,

“ *dratus*, and others, who saw *Jesus Christ* in
 “ the *Flesh*, yet lived till the Reigns of *Trajan*
 “ and *Adrian*.”

To this we may add what *Mr. Dodwell* has
 observed on the same Head: “ Moreover, says
 “ he, there is no doubt but that *John the Elder*
 “ (mentioned by *Papias*) and *Aristion*, who were
 “ of the *primary Disciples of Christ*, lived to the
 “ Times of *Trajan*; and others also, who being
 “ healed and raised from the Dead by the LORD,
 “ *Quadratus* testifies to have lived till his Time,
 “ in his *Apology to Adrian*.” And again, “ The
 “ *Eye-witnesses* came to the Times of *Trajan*.”
 Upon the whole then, we may strike off fifty,
 nay sixty Years, and more too, from the last
 Instances mentioned by *Pliny*, and yet assert with
 great *Truth* and *Propriety* of Language, not only
 as the *Bishop* does, indefinitely, that *Matters* were
 fresh in Memory, but that they were *fresh* in
 the Memory of many Persons who had been *Eye-*
witnesses to the *Truth*, and were then living.

The next Charge is, That the *Bishop* knows
 further also, that the *sacred Writings* could not
 be obtained by Heathens, &c. whereas I am ve-
 rily perswaded that the *Bishop* knows the direct
 contrary of all that is here asserted. For if Co-
 pies of the *Gospels* had not been very common,
 and in the Hands of all who thought it worth
 their while to peruse them, How could *Celsus*
 who lived in the Days of *Adrian*, and was a *Hea-*
then, object it to the *Christians* that some of
 them had changed the *Gospel* from the *first* Co-
 pies of it *three, four, or more times*? In answer
 to

‘ Non est porro dubium *Trajan*i tempora attigisse *Papiae*
 illum *Joannem Presbyterum* & *Aristionem*, ipsos etiam è *pri-*
mariis ipsius Domini *Discipulis*; sed & alios, quos, &c.
Dissert. 1. in Iren. §. 21.

‘ Ad *Trajanum* ipsi pertigerint *Αὐτόπται*. *Diss. 2. §. 17.*

to this, ¹ *Origen* does not reply, that a *Heathen* could not come to the sight of these *Books*, or, that there were not a great many Copies *abroad*; but lays the Blame in the right place, on the *Marcionites*, the *Valentinians*, &c. Now these *Hereticks* could not be supposed to corrupt the *Gospels*, but with a view of communicating these Corruptions under the pretended Authority of *inspired Writings*; and this Practice made it equally necessary for the *orthodox Christians* to be very free in shewing the *true Copies*, in order to convert *Infidels*, and vindicate *Christianity* from the Misrepresentation of *Hereticks*. And *Justin Martyr*,² throughout both his *Apologies*, always supposes that the *Heathens* either had or might have the free Liberty of reading the *Gospels*; particularly in his *second*, speaking of the *Records* of the *Apostles* and the Contents of them, he says, Which we have offered to your *Inspection*.

We may also allow his *Lordship* to know, that the *Christians* called *Traditores*, were not so stilled from permitting a *Heathen* desirous of Information to peruse the *Gospels*, but because, in order to avoid *Martyrdom*, they gave up their *Bibles* to the *Emperor's* Officers (which Action was then look'd on by the *Church* as an implicit Renunciation of *Christianity*) when they were put to this Trial in the 19th of *Diocletian*. So that the Difficulties which the *Inquirer* falsely supposes the *Heathens* to be under, as to their being able to get a tolerable Knowledge of these *Books*, can be no Objection against what the *Bishop* says,
“ That

¹ μεταχαράζαντες τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἢ οἶδα, ἢ πρὸς ἀπὸ Μαρκίου, ἢ πρὸς ἀπὸ Ὀυαλεντίνου, οἶμαι ἢ καὶ πρὸς ἀπὸ Λυκάνου. Orig. cont. Cels. p. 77.

² ἀπερ εἰς ἐπίστασιν καὶ ὑμῖν ἀπεδωκόμην. Apol. 2.

“ That there were Persons living when the Gospels were writ, who wanted not Inclination “ to detect the Evangelists, if they could have “ been convicted of Falshood.” His *Lordship* has also very justly observed, That at the Time here specified, they were *published* as well as *writ*. For what is *Publication*, but a Delivery of a Copy to any one or more, with liberty to take and communicate as many Copies as they please, and so to multiply Transcripts *in infinitum*. What Mr. *Dodwell* particularly means, is an ¹ *authoritative* Publication of a *Collection* of the sacred Writings, as a *Rule* of Faith and Manners to the *whole Christian Church*: But the first is as truly a *Publication* as the last, and differs only in Circumstances not at all *essential* to the Nature of it; and in contradistinction to such an *authoritative* Publication, (which he affirms to be made in the Time of *Trajan*) he says, that these *canonical* ² Writings, (whether he means the *Originals* or not, no one can collect from his manner of expressing it) were so confined to the *Archives* of *particular private Churches* or Men, till the Times of *Trajan*, or perhaps of *Adrian*, that they did not come to the Knowledge of the *Catholick Church*.

All the Concealment or Lying-hid, which this *Author* intends, is only such as may serve to countenance his own *Hypothesis*, That they were not *collected* into a *Canon* by any *publick* Authority till that Time. Whence we see, that he makes the *Strength* of his Argument consist in *opposing* these Writings, considered as Records,
in

¹ *Consignatus Evangelistarum canonicorum Codex.*

² *Latitabant usque ad recentiora illa, seu Trajani, seu etiam fortasse Hadriani, tempora in privatarum ecclesiarum, seu etiam hominum scriniis, scripta illa canonica, ne ad ecclesie catholicae notitiam pervenirent. §. 38.*

in the possession of *private Churches*, and as *collected into a Body* by the *universal Church*; which can in nowise affect the Authority or Genuineness of the inspired Writings themselves. If we should suppose that the *Epistle* which *St. Paul* sent to the *Romans*, for Instance, was so preserved among the Records of that Church, that the Churches of *Asia* or *Afric* never had a sight of it till the Times of *Trajan*, will not the Evidence of the *Roman Church*, supported by many Persons who had seen the *Apostles*, and were the very *next* in Succession to them, prove sufficient to establish the Credit of that *Epistle*?—that it was the same which *St. Paul* sent to the *Romans*, and that it had been always used and acknowledged as such by the *whole Congregation* of the *Roman Church*. And whether an *Epistle*, thus *used* and acknowledged, can be said (as the *Inquirer* would make *Mr. Dodwell* speak) *not to come to* ¹ *LIGHT*, till so many Years after it was writ: Or, whether this (and the same Reason will extend to the other Parts of the *Canon*) was not *published* as well as *writ*, when it was first sent to *Rome* as a common *Directory* of *Faith* and *Manners*, we must leave with the *Reader's Judgment*.

The next Accusation runs thus: ² “I cannot, says the *Inquirer*, but take notice, that the Letter-writer extracts his Proofs for the *Inspiration* of the *New-Testament*, not from the Propriety and Excellency of the Subject-Matter of its several Books—but most an end out of the *Fathers*—*The external or written Word of God* can have no other sure Test, than that of its own *intrinsic Excellency*, as it stands apparently conform to the *divine Nature*, and to
“ the

¹ *Inquiry*, p. 16.

² *Ibid.* p. 26.

“ *the Nature and Reason of Things*; i. e. it must
 “ necessarily prove itself—and not be made to
 “ subsist on the *Credit* of any Set of Men what-
 “ soever.”

Whatever the *Inquirer* might design by these well-sounding Phrases, it will be soon manifest to any intelligent *Reader*, that they are nothing to the purpose as to the *present* Subject, viz. the *Inspiration* of the *New Testament*, which is a plain Question of Matters of *Fact*; as, whether *God Almighty* did send his *Son Jesus Christ* into the World; whether the *Spirit* of *God* remained on him or not; whether *Christ* sent his *Apostles* as the Father sent him; and whether the same *Spirit* was communicated to them also. Now every Body knows that *Facts* at so great a distance, can receive no positive direct *Proof* but from *Authority*. The Power of the *Holy Spirit* acting upon the Understanding of any one, is still invisible to other Men; and therefore our *Saviour* himself appeals to his Miracles; *The Works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same Works that I do bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me*, John v. 36. Considerations drawn from the *Propriety* and *Excellency* of the Subject-Matter of any Book, can never prove that *God* did by an immediate Act of *Inspiration* communicate either the Ideas or the Language. For if the Truth of any Axiom in the *Mathematics*; if the Usefulness of any Precept in *Religion* or *Morality*; if the Style and Manner of Composition in *Prose* or *Poetry*, could from these several Excellencies, prove themselves the Result of direct *Inspiration*, then must the Works of *Euclid*, *Aristotle*, *Homer*, *Demosthenes*, &c. be all received as the *external Word* of *God*.

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¹ John iii. 34.

Where shall we find any greater *Truth* than this, That two *Right-Lines* cannot comprehend *Space*? Where any thing more conform to the *Divine Nature*, than that *God* must be eternal? Where any Sentiments more agreeable to the *Nature and Reason of Things*, than that none can be *happy* without *Virtue*; that there can be no *Virtue* without *Reason*? But as no one ever yet endeavoured to convince Mankind, by Arguments drawn from the *intrinsic* Worth and Value of these Sentences, that they were given by the immediate Impulses of the *Holy Ghost*; so neither can any *Christian* Writer pretend to say, that the *Subject-Matter* of the several Books of the *New Testament* (how excellent, how valuable, how worthy of *God* soever it may appear) does from *itself* afford a direct conclusive *Proof* that it is the *external or written Word of God*. The Question now before us (as the *Bishop* has most judiciously observed in his second *Pastoral Letter*)¹ “must stand or fall by the Test of Reason; or, in other Words, according as Reason finds the Evidences of its (*viz. any Revelation*) coming from *God*, to be or not to be sufficient and conclusive; and the Matter of it to contradict or not contradict the natural Notions which Reason gives us of the Being and Attributes of *God*, and of the essential Differences between Good and Evil.” So that altho’ there does lie a *negative* Argument, as his *Lordship* affirms, from a manifest *Contradiction* to our *natural Notions*, That what does so contradict, cannot be the written *Word of God*; yet every Man must see the Absurdity of reasoning *affirmatively* in the following manner, *viz.* This is agreeable to the *Nature and Reason of Things*;
erg.

¹ Page 4.

erg. This is the *external or written Word of God*. The *Bishop* knows both himself and his Subject too well, to follow the *Inquirer* in such chimerical impossible Projects.

I must now consider some few Particulars which are thrown in to heighten the Controversy, and purposely misrepresent his *Lordship* and the *whole Clergy* as Accomplices. The *Inquirer*, speaking of the *Scriptures*, p. 58. says, "Tho' we are told our Salvation depends upon their most exact Truth and Certainty, yet the *Priests* will not permit *honest Men* to make use of their Understandings with the same *Freedom* when they read *these*, as they take upon themselves always to do when they read a *profane Author*, tho' there is so much the greater Reason for it: the *Clergy*, for Instance, of the *Church of England* (the most learned in the World) tho' they know the *sacred Scriptures have doubtful Books in them*, and have been moreover *horridly abused with respect even to some Essentials*; and altho' they allow there are above 30000 *various Readings* in them, many of them of Importance; yet with their Goodwill, they would tie Men down still to an implicit Belief of every Book, and every Period or Passage in those Books, without Examination; though what they many times rigidly insist on, *tends neither to the Honour of God, nor the Good of Men*; and tho' it evidently disagrees with the *Light of Nature and the Reason of Things*; to be governed by which, is, by the *Letter-writer* deem'd an *Infidel Principle*."

And in Proof of what is here alledged, he refers us to *Pastoral Letter*, p. 6, 7. "Where, he says, the Author reproaches those who pre-

“ tend to this just and necessary Freedom, without which all Reading is vain.”

We shall have no Occasion of any far-fetch'd Arguments to remove this *large Collection* of Reproach and Injury, which is here so liberally bestowed, *first* on the *Bishop*, and *then* on the *whole Body* of the *Clergy*. The very Passages referr'd to in the *Pastoral Letter*, appear in manifest Contradiction to it, and run thus:

“ The Patrons of Infidelity have told us openly and without Reserve, how little they consider the Scriptures as a Rule to Men either of Belief or Practice. They plead for the reading them with such *Freedom*, as to *assent* or *dissent*, just as they judge it agrees or disagrees with the *Light of Nature* and the *Reason of Things*; and commend those as the only wise Men, who *believe not the Doctrines because contained in Scripture, but the Scripture on account of the Doctrines*; who admit not any of its *Doctrines* without an *Examination* by that Rule; who admit such Things for *divine Scripture* as [they being Judges] *tend to the Honour of God, and the Good of Men, and nothing else*; and who do not admit any thing to be writ by *divine Inspiration*, tho' it occurs ever so often in *Scripture*, till they are certain it will bear the *Test* they lay down.”

The *Freedom* his *Lordship* here speaks of, is manifestly a Liberty which the *Patrons of Infidelity* take of *paying or refusing* Obedience to the *Precepts* of the *Gospel*, just as the Command, under Consideration, seems agreeable to their own present Judgment of Things. But the *Freedom* of reading the *Scripture* as we read *profane Authors*, so as to have our Understandings determined by the *known Sense* of the Words,

Words, and obscure Passages assisted by others of the same Tenor which are *more clear*: This is what his *Lordship* constantly advises, and indeed virtually contends for in this very Place; or, How could he blame those who *will not admit any thing to be writ by divine Inspiration, tho' it occurs ever so often in the Scripture?*

In short, the Case is plainly this: The *Bishop* considers *Christ* as our *Lawgiver*, and the *Scriptures* as containing the Body of his *Laws* designed for our Government; and this being previously allow'd, no Subject of the *Messiah* can read these *sacred Books* with the *same Freedom* of admitting or rejecting any particular Statute or Clause in them, as he may safely do in relation to *Plato's Republick*, or the *Utopian Empire*. Let any one consider himself as a Subject of *Great-Britain*, and our *Acts of Parliament* as the standing Measure of his *Obedience* to his *Prince*, and of his Behaviour to his *Fellow-Subjects*; How ridiculous would it be found for any one to say, "That there was much greater Reason for it; and that therefore he might surely read these *Acts* with the *same Freedom* as he did *profane Authors*;" i. e. with such a *Freedom* as not to consider them as a *Rule of Practice*, but to assent or dissent, to pay or to refuse *Obedience* to what Part or Precepts he thought proper, even as he *himself* should judge the Particulars to agree or disagree with the *Light of Nature* and the *Reason of Things*?

Certainly the *Scriptures* are as much a *Rule of Action* to *Christians*, as the *Laws of Great-Britain* are to a *British Subject*; and whoever reads either with the view of paying no Submission but to such Commands only as he *himself* shall fancy, will scarce deserve the Name of
a Subject

a *Subject* or a *Christian*. That *Freedom* then which the *Bishop* dislikes, is a *Freedom* plainly *contradictory* to the very first Notion of a *Law*, and consequently what cannot consist with it. All other *Freedom*s necessary to the full and safe Interpretation of the *Law*, are every where recommended, particularly *Pastoral Letter* I. p. 6. where we are earnestly desired “to read the *Scriptures*, to make them *familiar* to us, and “to *compare* one part of them with another.”

What follows is downright declamatory *Invective*, thrown together in Haste and Anger, without the least Appearance of Consistency or Truth.—As to the *Bishop*’s and the *Clergy*’s rigidly insisting on Things which *tend neither to the Honour of God, nor the Good of Men*, let the *Inquirer*’s own Thoughts be his Judge, how such a vile uncharitable Reflection can possibly be collected from this Passage (which is all that is alledged to prove it) *viz.* “That “the *Patrons of Infidelity* commend those as “the only wise Men, who *admit* such Things “for *divine Scripture*, as [they being Judges] “*tend to the Honour of God, and the Good of* “*Men, and nothing else.*” A Child must see, that the Sentence is only declaratory of the *Opinion* and *Practice* of other Men, *viz.* the *Patrons of Infidelity*.

But this, scandalous as it is, it seems is not enough; the *Bishop*, we are told, does thus insist, tho’ it evidently disagrees with the *Light of Nature* and the *Reason of Things*; to be governed by which, is, by the *Letter-writer*, deemed an *Infidel Principle*. His Lordship has indeed mention’d these Words—the *Light of Nature*, and the *Reason of Things*; but then it is barely as Principles from whence the *Patrons of Infidelity*

delity pretend to form their own Judgment; by which Judgment they afterward resolve to measure the *Laws of Christ*. But I am yet at a loss to find where the *Bishop* so much as once intimates, that “to be governed by the *Light of Nature*, and the *Reason of Things*, is an *Infidel Principle*.” And yet we find him called in the next Paragraph—“a declared Enemy to rational Liberty”—and charged “with insulting poor *Sceptics* for daring to suspect they may sometimes hit on false *Readings*, and possibly be imposed on in point of *divine Revelation*; which he will by no means suffer, tho’ those *Readings* should contradict (as is said) *natural Light* and the *Reason of Things*; and this at the same time too, (which is the Jest of it) that he *intreats them* carefully to *peruse the sacred Writings*.”

In answer to all these *personal repeated Calumnies*, we need use no other Arguments than his *Lordship’s* own Declarations, *Pastoral Letter II. p. 4.* whence I shall transcribe the following Words: “Those amongst us who have laboured of late Years to set up Reason against Revelation, would make it pass for an established Truth, That if you will embrace Revelation, you must of course quit your Reason; which, if it were true, would doubtless be a strong Prejudice against Revelation. But so far is this from being true, that it is universally acknowledged, That Revelation itself is to stand or fall by the Test of Reason; or, in other Words, according as Reason finds the Evidences of its coming from God, to be or not to be sufficient and conclusive; and the Matter of it to contradict or not to contradict the natural Notions which

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“ Reason

“ Reason gives us of the Being and Attributes
 “ of God, and of the essential Differences be-
 “ tween Good and Evil.”—And what is this
 but to be governed by the *Light of Nature* and
 the *Reason of Things*? To what base Arts, to
 what wretched Falshoods are the Enemies of
Christ reduced!

But from the *Bishop* we are now hurry'd on
 to those who hold him in the highest Venera-
 tion for his *Work's sake*, viz. to the *Clergy*:
 “ They, the *Inquirer* says, know that the Scri-
 “ ptures have doubtful Books, that they have
 “ been horridly abused, &c.” This wild random
 Accusation, deserves no other Reply than what
 the *Roman* Orator formerly return'd to that
 great *Free-thinker Antony*:—¹ What is less the
 part, I say, not of an *Orator*, but of a *Man*,
 than to object that to an Adversary, which if
 he denies but with a *Word*, the Person who ob-
 jects can proceed no farther. If the *Clergy* speak
 out, and say they know of no such Things,
 What becomes of all his Declamation?

Lastly, As to the repeated mention of *vari-
 ous Readings*, a Stranger would be inclined to
 think, that no *Author* had ever reckon'd with
 them upon this Account; whereas Dr. *Bentley*
 (and I believe they will never either forget or
 forgive the *manner* of his doing it) has carried
 the Argument into a *Demonstration*, and fully
 shewn, from this very *Topic*, the utter *Impossi-
 bility* of any material Changes. If the *Inquirer*
 will speak to the Purpose, let him prepare an
 Answer to what the *Doctor* has writ; or, at least,
 a small Treatise, to let us know how the Love of
Truth

¹ Quid enim est minus non dico Oratoris sed hominis,
 quam id obicere adversario, quod ille si verbo negarit,
 longius progredi non possit qui objecerit. *Philip. 2.*

Truth is consistent with the Repetition of a stale baffled Objection, without the least mention of any *Answer* made to it.

Having thus gone through every particular Objection which the *Inquirer* has been pleased to make to several distinct Passages of the *Pastoral Letter*, and shown how little Foundation there is for some of them, and how perfectly false, absurd, or frivolous, the others are, I shall now proceed to shew,

That his *Lordship* has produced the most proper and conclusive *Evidence* to prove the *canonical Authority* of the *Gospels*; and that he has thereby fully establish'd the *Point in question*, and done as much as either his *Promise* or the *Nature* of his *Work* required.

And *first*, let us take a View of what the *Bishop* has alledged in Proof; it stands thus,—

“ We accordingly find all the four *Gospels* under the Names of the several *Evangelists*,
 “ distinctly spoken of by the most early *Writers* of the Church, as the known and undoubted *Records* of our *Saviour's Life* and *Actions*; and as such received by all *Christian Churches*, and read in their publick *Assemblies*.
 “ *Clement*, the Disciple of *St. Paul*, cites many *Passages* out of them; and in one place, after having quoted the *Prophecy* of *Isaiab*, he adds, *And another Scripture saith*,
 “ and then quotes the *Gospel* of *St. Matthew*.
 “ In another place he cites the *Gospel* of *St. Luke*, with these Words immediately prefixed, *The Lord saith in the Gospel*.
 “ *Poly-*
 “ *carp*

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* *Pastoral Letter*, p. 15, 16.

* *Clem. Ep. ad Cor. Ep. 2. §. 2, 8. Of the Authority of which Epistle, see Cotelerius, p. 132, 140, 181.*

* *Grabe Not. in Iren. p. 205. Bull Def. Fid. Nic. p. 52, 53;*

“ *carp*, a Disciple of *St. John*, mentions these
 “ four Gospels distinctly and by name, with
 “ particular Circumstances relating to each, if
 “ some Fragments ascribed to him be genuine.
 “ ¹ *Justin Martyr*, speaking of the Institution
 “ of the Lord's-Supper, says, The Apostles in
 “ their *Records*, which are called Gospels, de-
 “ clared that it was commanded by Christ to
 “ be so performed; and a little after adds, That
 “ those Records were publickly read in the
 “ Christian Assemblies on the Lord's-Day: And
 “ in his other Works, ² he uses the same Stile of
 “ the *Records of the Apostles*, and cites several
 “ Passages out of them, as the standing Re-
 “ cords of the Church. ³ *Tatian*, the Disciple
 “ of *Justin*, reduced the four Gospels into one;
 “ which, in After-Ages, was usually called the
 “ *Harmony of the four Gospels*. ⁴ *Ireneus* gives
 “ this Account of all the four, which hath al-
 “ ready been taken notice of in ⁵ part. *Mat-*
 “ *thew*, says he, delivered his Gospel to the
 “ *Hebrews*, while *Peter* and *Paul* preached at
 “ *Rome*; after whose Departure, *Mark*, the
 “ Disciple and Interpreter of *Peter*, conveyed
 “ to us in Writing the Things which *Peter* had
 “ preached; and *Luke*, the Companion of *Paul*,
 “ recorded in a Book the Gospel which *Paul*
 “ preached. Afterwards, *John* the Disciple of
 “ our Lord, who also leaned on his Breast at
 “ Supper, published his Gospel while he stay-
 “ ed at *Ephesus in Asia*.” The same ⁶ *Ireneus*,
 “ speaking of the Authority of the Gospels,
 “ says, “ That the very Hereticks gave their
 “ Testimony

¹ Justin Apol. 2.

² Justin Dial. Tryph. p. 327, 328, 329, 331, 332, 333, 334.

³ Euseb. l. 4. c. 29. Monotessaron.

⁴ Iren. l. 3. c. 1.

⁵ Page 12.

⁶ Iren. l. 3. c. 11.

“ Testimony to them, while each laboured to
 “ support his Opinion from them:” And as to
 “ the Number, “ That they were neither more
 “ nor less than four; and that they who made
 “ them either more or fewer, were vain, igno-
 “ rant, and presumptuous.” ¹ *Clement*, speaking
 “ of a Passage cited out of the *Egyptian Gos-*
 “ *pel*, says, It is not to be found in the four
 “ Gospels delivered down to us.” And ² *Origen*,
 “ mentioning the Writers of the four Gospels
 “ by name, and in their order, says, That those
 “ alone (and no other Gospels) had been uni-
 “ versally received in the Church.”

Thus stands the Testimony of the primitive Church, in regard to the *divine Authority* of the four Gospels, and their respective *Authors*; and any one would naturally expect, That a *Writer*, who calls this a loose and unsatisfactory Defence of the *Evangelists*, and who from hence took occasion, as he says, to enquire into the canonical Authority of St. *Matthew*; one would expect, I say, that a *Writer*, actuated by these Motives, should, at least, have taken some distinct and special Notice of what is here laid together; have disproved some single Evidence, and shewn, that one Particular, if not more, could not be supported. But this, I think, he knew to be impracticable, and therefore very wisely left it as he found it; and runs on to fill his *Reader's* Thoughts with some perverted Notions of those *Fathers*, who, according to his *own* Declarations, lived too late to be of any consequence in the present Case, Men of the third, fourth, fifth Centuries, &c. and even these he industriously confounds with the *Wran-*

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¹ Clem. Alex. Strom. l. 3.

² Orig. Com. in Matth. p. 203.

gles of *modern* Authors, who, as far as his *own* way of Reasoning can prevail, must be of much less consequence than the others. Whereas, what the *Bishop* has here laid down, is the most proper and conclusive Evidence, whereby he has not only enter'd into the Matter *more fully* and *distinctly* than in his former *Pastoral Letter*, which was all his *Lordship* was obliged to by Promise; but has brought together, in one View, all the most material Witnesses that have survived the Injuries of Time. And,

Every one who has Judgment enough to observe, That the *Laws* of Writing necessarily direct an *Author* to have the strictest Regard to the Nature of his Work, and the real Improvement and Satisfaction of those for whose sake he principally undertakes it, must readily allow, that long Citations in the *original* Languages, particular Inductions of every *heretical* Cavil, the many solid Arguments and learned Replies of the *Orthodox* from time to time, would have been contrary to all the Rules of *Criticism* in the present Treatise. The *Stile* and the *Manner*, both the Diction and the Composition of *Pastoral* Letters, must be *easy*, *clear*, and *familiar* to the Understanding of every honest, well-meaning Reader: *Their Doctrine should drop as the Rain; their Speech should distill as the Dew, as the small Rain upon the tender Herb*, Deut. xxxii. 2. The great, the only End their *Authors* aim at, being this, That as they have succeeded the *Apostles* in the Government of the Church of *Christ*, they may also follow the Practice of the *Apostles* in their Care of it. These Writings therefore should be *profitable for Doctrine, and for Instruction in Righteousness*: This, as I said, being their only View,—that the good *Christians*, or the

the *Men of God may be made perfect*; and such the present *Pastoral Letters* are. But to recount all the perverse Disputations of *Men of corrupt Minds, destitute of the Truth*, What would this be, but to cover every thing with Clouds and thick Darknes? — Such a Method of Writing would be really found as foreign from the original Nature and Design of them, as the declamatory Stile; or as artful and pathetic Efforts to heat and inflame the *Passions*, and not persuade and convince our *Reason*.

I have before observed, that the *Inquirer* has not challenged or objected to any one *Evidence* his *Lordship* has produced: But since, upon the whole, he frequently repeats his Dislike of them in *general*, it will not be improper to enter freely into the *Particulars*, and give the *Reader* such an explicit Insight into what is here alledged, as I persuade myself must convince an impartial Judge, that the Defence which the *Bishop* has here made of the *Canon of the four Gospels*, is full and clear.

The first *Author* his *Lordship* quotes, is *Clement Romanus*, whose Name was written in the *Book of Life*,¹ the undoubted *Disciple* of *St. Paul*, *Bishop* of the Church of *Rome*, a Man of unquestioned *Sense* and *Learning*, who lived till the 3d of *Trajan*, A. D. 100. And that this *Clement* puts the Gospel of *St. Matthew* upon an equal Credit with the Writings of the Prophet *Isaiab*, which were ever received as *canonical*, is plain from what the *Bishop* has observed: For, after he had cited this Passage from *Isaiab*,² *Sing O barren, thou that didst not bear, break forth into singing, and cry aloud, &c.* he immediately subjoins,—

¹ Phil. iv. 3.

² Isa. liv. 1.

Matt. ix. subjoins,—and ¹ another Scripture saith,
 13. *I came not to call the Just, but Sinners—*
 So that St. Matthew and Isaiah, who were in
 his Opinion of equal Authority, must in his Judg-
 ment also be equally inspired; and that St. Cle-
 ment enjoy'd all the Advantages of knowing the
 Truth, that any one could possibly have, is more-
 over equally certain.

And in other Parts of the *Epistle*, we find the
 same *Scripture* (viz. that of St. Matthew) quoted
 several times, frequently in the very Words, al-
 ways according to the clear and genuine *Sense*

Matt. x. of the Author; v. g. *He himself* (Christ)
 32. says, ² *He who shall confess me before*
Men, him will I confess before my Father.— And
 again,—*For he* (Christ) says, ³ *Not every one that*
 Matt. vii. *saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall be sa-*
 20. *ved; but he that doth Righteousness.—*

Matt. xvi. And — ⁴ *What Profit is it, if a Man*
 26. *gain the whole World, and lose his Soul.*

Matt. xii. And—*The Lord hath said, ⁵ They are*
 50. *my Brethren, who do the Will of my*
Father.

To this I might add, that the same *Clement*,
 in his first *Epistle*, mentioning the Declaration
 of our *Saviour* concerning the Punishment of
 those Men who gave Offence to the *little ones*
 that

¹ Ἐπεὶ δὲ γὰρ λέγει· ἐκ ἡλθον χαλῆσαι δικαίους ἀλλὰ
 ἁμαρτωλούς. §. 2.

² Λέγει δὲ καὶ αὐτός· ὁ μολογῶν με ἐνώπιον τῶ ἀν-
 θρώπων ὁμολογῶν αὐτὸν ἐνώπιον τοῦ πατρὸς μου. §. 3.

³ Λέγει γάρ· ὁ πᾶς ὁ λέγων μοι κύριε κύριε σὺ δὲ οὐκ
 ἀλλά ὁ ποιῶν δικαιοσύνην. §. 4.

⁴ Τί γὰρ τὸ ὄφελος, εἰάν τις ὁλον κόσμον κερδήσῃ, καὶ τὴν
 ψυχὴν ζημιώσῃ. §. 6.

⁵ Καὶ γὰρ εἶπεν ὁ κύριος· Ἀλλοοὶ με ὑτοὶ εἰσιν, οἱ παι-
 ῦντες τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρὸς μου. §. 9.

that believed in him, uses the Word *καταποντισομαι*, to express their being cast into the Sea; which is to be found in the Gospel of St. Matthew only.

Moreover, the same Author, as the Bishop observes, quotes the Gospel of St. Luke with this Preface,—*The Lord saith in the Gospel, If ye keep not that which is small, who shall give you that which is great? For I say unto you, Luke xvi. he that is faithful in that which is little, 13. is faithful also in that which is much.*—And but two Sections before, from the same St. Luke, *The Lord saith, No Servant can serve two Masters, viz. God and Mammon.*

We may here take notice, that the Words *Scripture* and *Gospel*, were in use in the Time of St. Clement, to denote some certain Accounts of our Saviour's Life and Doctrine; and that the Writings of St. Matthew and St. Luke, had then obtained the Honour of being known and quoted by these Names.

A Citation from Polycarp follows next; and here his Lordship has been pleased to add, with his usual Candor,—*if some Fragments ascribed to him be genuine.*—But ^a *Feu-ardentius*, who first published them from a Manuscript writ in very antient Characters, affirms, in his Notes on *Irenæus*, That *Victor* Bishop of *Capua*, a Man learned in the *Greek* and *Latin* Languages, translated these Passages into *Latin*, about the Year 480 (*i. e.* 213 after the Death of Polycarp) from a
Greek

^a λέγει γὰρ ὁ Κύριος ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ — εἰ τὸ μικρὸν οὐκ ἐτηρήσατε, τὸ μέγα τίς ὑμῶν δώσει; λέγει γὰρ ὁ μὲν, ὅτι ὁ πιστὸς ἐν ἐλαχίστῳ, καὶ ἐν πολλῷ πιστὸς ἐστί. *ib.* §. 8.

^a Hæc Victor Capuanus, vir Græcæ & Latine doctus, circum A. D. 480, ex Græco responsum capitulorum B. Polycarpi codice, &c. *Feuar. in Not. Iren.* l. 3. c. 3.

Greek Book he was then possessed of; which contained the Heads of Answers made by *Polycarp*. And Bishop ¹ *Bull*, who is allowed by all a very competent *Judge* in Disputes of this nature, and who is here referred to, says, “ It is “ altogether likely that these Fragments are “ preserved to us, from some of those Epistles “ of *Polycarp* that are now lost;” And herein we find Passages quoted from each *Gospel*, and the four *Evangelists* distinctly named, especially in that Piece where he assigns Reasons why they began their Works with different Subjects. *Matthew*, says he, ² *writing to the Hebrews, gave the Genealogy of Christ—John ordained at Ephesus among the Gentiles—began his Gospel from the Cause of our Redemption—Luke from the Priesthood of Zacharias—Mark declares the old Things of prophetick Mystery which belong to the coming of Christ.*

The next Evidence his *Lordship* gives us, is *Justin Martyr*, who will let us have a full and decisive Account of the Question in Controversy: He was born of *Gentile* Parents, and bred up in the Religion and Philosophy of the *Heathen* World, and consequently could not be thought any wise prejudiced in the Favour of *Christianity*, but rather the contrary: So that his Conversion must be the Effect of a reasonable and strong Conviction; especially if we consider the almost continual Persecution and Dis-
grace

¹ Omnino verisimile est, ex aliis illis Polycarpi epistolis, quæ interciderunt, desumpta esse fragmenta illa quinque, *Eccl. Bull. Def. F. N. p. 52, 53.*

² Matthæus, ut Hebræis scribens, genealogiæ ordinem texuit—Joannes ad Ephesum constitutus—a causa nostræ redemptionis evangelii sumpsit exordium—Lucas a Zachariæ sacerdotio incipit—Marcus antiqua mysterii prophetici competentia adventui Christi declarat.

grace which the *Christian* Cause did then receive from the governing part of the World. Nothing but the Love of *Truth* can influence any one to change his *Profession* in such Circumstances; nothing but a conscious Certainty of having found the *Truth*, can support the Mind under such perpetual Insults and Oppressions. In the midst of all these Discouragements then, does *Justin* declare himself a *Christian*; and coming to *Rome* from the *Eastern* Parts of the World, about the beginning of the Reign of *Antoninus Pius*, in the Year of our Lord 140, he presented his first Apology to the *Emperor*, his two Sons, the *Senate*, and the whole People of *Rome*.

Now in this Apology, as the *Bishop* observes, speaking of the Institution of the *Lord's-Supper*, he says, That the *Apostles* : " in their Commentaries or Memoirs writ by them, which are called " *Gospels*, declare—That *Jesus* thus commanded them—that after he had taken Bread, and " blessed it, he said, *Do this in remembrance of me: this is my Body*—and, in like manner, taking the Cup and blessing it, he said, *This is my Blood*."—And moreover,—² That on the " Day called the Day of the *Sun*, there was an " Assembly made in one Place, of all who lived in the Cities or Country, and the *Records* of the *Apostles*, or the Writings of the " *Prophets*, were read as long as Conveniency " would allow." And in his Dialogue with

L

Tryphon,

¹ Οἱ δὲ Ἀπόστολοι ἐν τοῖς γενόμενοις ἐκ αὐτῶν ἀπομνημονεύμασιν, ἃ καλεῖται εὐαγγέλια, ὥτως παρέδωκαν ἐπιτελεῖσαι αὐτοῖς τὸ Ἰησοῦν &c.

² Τῇ τῷ ἡλικίᾳ λεγομένην ἡμέραν πάντων χτ' πόλεως, ἡ αἰγρεῖς μανόντων ὅτι τὸ αὐτὸ Σωτήριον γίνεται, καὶ τὰ ἀπομνημονεύματα τῶν Ἀποστόλων, καὶ τὰ συγγράματα τῶν προφητῶν ἀναγιγνώσκονται μέχρις ἐσχάτου.

Tryphon, after he had frequently mentioned these *Gospels* under the Name of Commentaries of the *Apostles*, and by his Quotations out of them shewn, that he set them on the same Foot as *Tryphon* did the *Old Testament*, speaking of what happened to *Christ* in that Night when they went out to the Mount of *Olives*, in order to lay hold on him, he says, "For it is recorded in those *Memoirs*, which I have said were composed by his *Apostles*, and by those who followed them;—that Sweat, as great Drops, fell from him as he prayed, and said, *If it be possible, let this Cup pass.*"—But there is no mention made of this particular Incident of his *Agony*, except by *St. Luke*. It is very reasonable therefore to conclude, that *St. Luke's Gospel* was then received. From this Passage also we may be informed, That distinct *Gospels* were then acknowledged as written by those who had been *Apostles* (ὑπὸ τῶν Ἀποστόλων) which the Rules of Grammar will not allow to be said of less than two (suppose *St. Matthew* and *St. John*); and that other *Gospels* were, at the same time, received as written by those who followed the *Apostles* (ὑπὸ ἐκείνοις παρακολουθησάντων); which being expressed in the plural Number also, must be two at least (suppose *St. Mark* and *St. Luke*). And this, as it is a conclusive Argument that the canonical *Gospels* in those Days could not be less than four, so when it is considered with other concurrent Proofs, it makes it not improbable that they were then no more than four.

The

Ἐν γὰρ τοῖς ὑπομνημονύμασι αὐτοῦ ὑπὸ τῶν Ἀποστόλων αὐτοῦ, καὶ τῶν ἐκείνοις παρακολουθησάντων Σωτητῶν, ὅτι ἰδίως ὡς ἐν ἑστέροις, κατεχέτο αὐτὸ ἐκτελεῖν καὶ λήγειν, παρελθόντι εἰ δυνατόν, τὸ ποτήριον τούτο.

The only Questions that can now remain, are these two: First, How *Justin* could be certain that those Writings which in his Time were *publickly* read in the *Christian* Assemblies every *Lord's-Day*, were really the Writings of the *Apostles*, or of those who *followed them*. And,

Secondly, Supposing this granted, How can we be certain that the *Gospels* we now use, are the same he speaks of? And

Both these Questions will be soon resolved in the Favour of *Christianity*, by the help of that Evidence alone which his *Lordship* has here produced.

The *first* Inquiry then is, How *Justin* himself could be certain, &c.

And here let us observe, that the blessed *Martyr* does not speak of Writings or Records locked up in private *Desks*, or any wise concealed from publick *View*, but of such Commentaries as were read and openly acknowledged in the *Christian* Assemblies, as divinely *inspired*: From whence their *Duty* was declared to them in an *authoritative* Manner; and by the Contents of which their *Hopes* were animated, and their *Lives* regulated: These therefore must be *universally* received.—But it will be said, Supposing these *Gospels* to be universally received among *Christians*, in the Age of *Justin*, as the *Rule* of Faith and Practice, How does this prove, that either *Justin*, or the *Christians* then living, *knew* these to be the genuine Writings of the *Apostles*, &c.

To this we answer, that the Year when *Justin* presented his *Apology*, is allowed by all to be the 140th of the *Christian* *Æra*. And in this

Piece we find the following Passage.—“Many
 “ Men, and many Women, who are sixty and
 “ seventy Years old, and who were discipled to
 “ Christ from Children, retain their Virginity;
 “ and I may brag, that I am able to show such
 “ among all sorts of Men.” What is here said
 is not spoke of one or two, but of *many*; and
 those of *each Sex* and Persons of *Figure*, as well
 as of the more inferior Rank; and *All* these are
 said to have been brought up in the *Christian*
 Institution from their being *Children*: So that
 if we take those of *seventy*, and allow them ca-
 pable of Instruction at *ten* Years old, they must
 begin to learn the Rules of Duty in the Year
 80, which will prove 47 Years from our *Savi-*
our's Crucifixion. But we shall be ask'd again,
 By whom were these Men *discipled* (as he calls
 it); and how shall we be satisfied that their *In-*
structors were not deceived?

To this may be replied, what is on all hands
 allowed, That the Generation of those Men,
 who were *Eye-witnesses*, and made *Disciples* by
Christ himself, did not come to an end till the
 Times of *Trajan*, not to say of *Adrian*. So that
 these Disciples whom *Justin* speaks of as Men
 of *seventy* Years old when he writ, must be at
 least *twenty-eight* when *St. John* left the World,
 and no *new* Converts, but *Christians* from their
Infancy. These Men therefore must have recei-
 ved their Instructions either from the *Eye-wit-*
nesses and *primary* Disciples of *Christ*, or from
 those who were appointed to that Office by the
Apostles or the *first* Preachers of *Christianity*:
 For

ἵ πολλοί πνες, καὶ πολλὰι, ἐξεκοντῆται καὶ ἐβδουηκοντῆ-
 ται, οἱ ἐκ παίδων ἐμαθητῶντασαν τῷ Χριστῷ, ἀφθόροι δια-
 μένουσι καὶ εὐχόμενοι κατὰ πᾶν γένος ἀνθρώπων τοιούτους
 δεῖξαι. Grab. Ed. p. 28.

For that the *Apostles*, where-ever they founded a *Church*, instituted both *Bishops* and *Deacons* for the better Preservation and Increase of it, we are fully informed from Church-History; but no where more particularly, than in the first Epistle of St. *Clement*. The Place being clear and express to our present Purpose, viz. to shew that Persons who were discipled to *Christ* in the Year 80, i. e. 47 after his Crucifixion, must have their Instruction from those who could not possibly be deceived themselves, I shall give it at large.

“The Apostles, says he, preached to us from
 “ the Lord Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ from
 “ God; Christ therefore was sent from God,
 “ the Apostles from Christ. Both these Mis-
 “ sions were well disposed by the Will of God.
 “ Receiving therefore the Commands, and be-
 “ ing fully persuaded by the Resurrection of
 “ our Lord Jesus Christ, and confidently re-
 “ lying on the Word, assisted with the Fulness
 “ of the Spirit, they went abroad preaching
 “ the Glad-Tidings that the Kingdom of God
 “ was coming. Preaching therefore thro’ the
 “ Provinces and Cities, they ordained their first
 “ Fruits (or first Converts) after they had tried
 “ them by the Spirit, to be *Bishops* and *Dea-*
 “ *cons* to those who should afterwards believe.”

These are the Words of *Clemens Romanus*, who was himself made *Bishop* of the *Roman* *Gentile* Church by St. *Peter*; and after the Death of *Cletus*, upon a Coalition of the *Jewish* and *Gentile*

οἱ ἀπόστολοι ὑπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ — μετὰ πληροφορίας πνεύ-
 ματος ἀγίου ἐξῆλθον, εὐαγγελιζόμενοι τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ
 μέλλου ἐρχεσθαι. Κατὰ χώρας ἐν ταῖς πόλεσι κηρύσσοντες,
 καθίστανον τὰς ἀρχὰς αὐτῶν, δοκιμάζοντες τὰ πνεύματα,
 εἰς ἐπιτόπιον καὶ διακόνους τῶν μιλόντων ψεῦδος. Ep. i.
 ad Cor. §. 42.

Gentile Converts, presided as sole Governor of that Church for above nine Years, his Martyrdom falling out in the third of *Trajan*.

It remains therefore, that the Persons whom *Justin* here mentions as *seventy* Years old when he writ his Apology, must have received their Instruction, some from the *Apostles* themselves, some from the *Eye-witnesses*, or first Disciples; and the Remainder from the *first Converts* to Christianity; whom the *Apostles*, we see, "made "*Bishops* and *Deacons* to those who should afterwards believe, first trying them by the *Spirit*." There is no room then to imagine, that the Persons who instructed these Men in the Principles of *Christianity*, could be possibly deceived in prescribing to them the use of such *Books*, as they must know to be written either by the *Apostles* or by those who *followed them*.

It is evident therefore beyond Contradiction, that *Justin Martyr*, whom his *Lordship* here alleges, must have the greatest Certainty conceivable, that those *Books* which he calls the *Records of the Apostles*, &c. were received and acknowledged from their first Writing, as the real Works of the *Apostles*, &c. and that they were the same with those which in his Time were *publickly* read in *all Christian Assemblies*; I say in *All*—For *Justin* was a Native of *Palestine*, had travelled into *Ægypt*, had visited *Greece*, and was at *Rome* when he writ his Apology; in all which Respects he was happily qualified to declare what was the Usage of the *Catholic* or universal Church.

The next thing to be considered, is this, That granting what is now said to be true, How are we assured, that our present *Gospels* are the same that the Church of *Christ* received in the Days
of

of *Justin*, and what he so frequently styles the *Records of the Apostles*?

Here we might fairly reason from the Nature of the *Thing itself*, and shew, how utterly impossible it must be for any Generation of *Christians* to make a total *Change*, and substitute new *Books* in the room of those which were so universally received, and constantly read on the *Lord's-Day* to every Assembly of *Christians* throughout the *Roman Empire*. But (say the *Infidels*) How can we be secure that some, if not many, very material Relations, Precepts, and Doctrines have not been altered? Why, even this could not be accomplish'd, without a Supposition that the whole *Christian Church* would come into the Cheat. For when some *Heretics*, whose Godliness was Gain, did attempt it, in order to support their own Notions, How soon was the Imposture discovered? An Appeal made to those ancient and received *Copies*, which the *Catholic Church* had acknowledged as *canonical*, immediately shew'd their Innovations, and condemn'd their Corruptions. And to conceive the *whole collective Body* of the *Christian People*, dispersed over all the *Provinces and Regions* of the *Roman Empire*, *Orthodox* as well as *Hereticks*, conspiring to change here and there a *few single Periods* in these *Records*, and this Agreement never to be mentioned by any *Writer*, is a Supposition not fit for any Man in his Senses to make or own. And, in *Fact*, when the *Marcionites*, &c. did attempt to corrupt some Passages in favour of their own Tenets, How was the whole World alarm'd with the Noise of it, both from *Pagans* and *Christians*?

But

¹ *Vid. Orig. cont. Cels. p. 77.*

But to be more particular as to the Testimony of *Justin*, I shall shew from his own Works, that the *Gospels* we now have, can be no other than those he mentions as *canonical* in his own Time: For the many Quotations he there makes from them, not only as to the *Sense*, but in the *very Words* of these Authors, will be an undoubted Evidence (if we had no other) according to all the Rules of *Criticism*, that his and our *Gospels* are the same. To pursue this Argument thro' all its Instances, and proceed by way of *Induction*, would be too tedious to the Generality of *Readers*, tho' it gives no small Pleasure and Assurance to a retired thoughtful Mind; I shall therefore, at present, only say, that a very great part of all the four *Gospels* are to be found in the Works of *Justin*, and go on to shew, that the two first Chapters of *St. Matthew's Gospel*, which are more particularly excepted against, were received in his Time. And,

In Proof of this, it will be necessary to translate what is found in *Justin's Dialogue with Tryphon*; where he says, ²“ As soon as he (*Christ*) “ was born, the ³ *Magi* or *Wise-men* came from “ *Arabia* to worship him; but first they went “ to ⁴ *Herod*, who then reigned in your Land. “ —And when the *Wise-men* came to him from “ *Arabia*, and said, We know from a ⁵ *Star* “ which appears in the Heavens, that there is “ a *King*

¹ Inquiry, p. 70.

² ἅμα γὰρ τὸ γεννηθῆναι αὐτὸν, μάγοι ἀπὸ Ἀραβίας παρελθόντες προσεκύνησαν αὐτῷ, πρότερον ἐλθόντες πρὸς Ἡρώδην ὃ ἐν τῇ γῇ ὑμῶν τότε βασιλεύοντα. — καὶ γὰρ οὗτος ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἡρώδης μαθὼν παρὰ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων τὰ λατρεῖα ὑμῶν, κτλ.

³ Matth. c. ii. v. 1.

⁴ v. 3—7.

⁵ v. 2.

“ a *King* born in this your Country, and we are
 “ come to worship him: *Herod* was then in-
 “ formed by the ¹ *Elders* of your People, who
 “ said, he must be born in ² *Bethlehem*; for it
 “ is written in the *Prophet*, And thou ³ *Bethle-*
 “ *hem* in the Land of *Judah*, art not the least
 “ among the Princes of *Judah*, for out of thee
 “ shall come a Governor, who shall rule my Peo-
 “ ple — And the Wise-men from *Arabia* come-
 “ ing to *Bethlehem*, and ⁴ worshipping the Child,
 “ and offering to him Gifts, *Gold*, *Frankincense*,
 “ and *Myrrh*; after they had worshipped the
 “ Child, were commanded by ⁵ *Revelation* not
 “ to return back again to *Herod* — And *Joseph*,
 “ who was betrothed to ⁶ *Mary*, and first of all
 “ designed to put away his Spouse, thinking
 “ she was big by human Means, *i. e.* by Forni-
 “ cation, was warned by a ⁷ *Vision* not to put
 “ away his Wife; the *Angel* saying to him,
 “ That which is in her Womb is of the *Holy*
 “ *Ghost*. Being therefore somewhat terrified,
 “ he did ⁸ not put her away; but he went from
 “ *Nazareth* where he lived, to be enrolled at
 “ *Bethlehem*, his proper Country — ⁹ And he, to-
 “ gether with *Mary*, is commanded to go into
 “ *Egypt*, and to remain there till it should be
 “ revealed to them, that they might return to
 “ the Land of *Judah*. — And *Herod*, when the
 “ Wise-men from *Arabia* did not come back
 “ to him, as he desired them, but, according
 “ to what was commanded them, went back
 “ ¹⁰ into their own Country another way: and
 “ when *Joseph*, together with *Mary* and the
 “ Child, were already got into *Egypt*, as it had
 M “ been

¹ Matth. ii. 4.² v. 5.³ v. 6.⁴ v. 11.⁵ v. 12.⁶ Matth. i. 19.⁷ v. 20.⁸ v. 24.⁹ Matth. ii. 13.¹⁰ v. 12.

“ been commanded them by *Revelation*, *Herod*
 “ not knowing which was the Child whom the
 “ Wise-men came to worship, commanded all
 “ the Male Children in *Bethlehem* to be killed
 “ without Distinction. And this was before
 “ prophesy'd of by *Jeremias*, the *Holy Spirit*
 “ speaking thus by him: ²In *Rama* there was
 “ a Voice heard, Lamentation and great Mourn-
 “ ing, *Rachel* weeping for her Children, and
 “ would not be comforted, because they were
 “ not.”

It is observable that in this, as well as in his
 other historical Accounts of *Christ*, *Justin* con-
 stantly appeals to the Records of the *Apostles*;
 but none of those Incidents or Particulars, which
 I have here translated, are mentioned in any of
 them, but in that of *St. Matthew*, and in the
 two first Chapters of this Author only. Those
 who can compare *Justin's* manner of Expression
 with that of the *Apostle* in the original Language,
 may have more Pleasure in the Means of their
 Conviction; but an *English Reader* cannot but
 be assured, that one of these Accounts must be
 taken from the other; and consequently, that
Justin, who took it from the Records of the
Apostles, must copy it from *St. Matthew's* Gos-
 pel.

I shall only add on this Head, that where our
 Author quotes the Prediction of *Micah* (which
 he does also in his first Apology) it is most evi-
 dent, that in both Places he uses the very Words
 of *St. Matthew*; which Words express the Sense
 of the Prophet only, but are neither a literal
 Recital from the *Seventy*, whom he usually fol-
 lows, nor a close Translation from the *Hebrew*.
 The same is observable as to the other Citation
 from

¹ Matth. ii. 16.

² v. 18.

from the Prophet *Jeremy*, concerning *Rachel* and the Loss of her Children, which he here makes use of, not as a *literal* Translation from the *Hebrew*, nor as a *verbal* Transcript from the *Seventy*, but Letter for Letter, as it stands in *St. Matthew*, with the bare Omission of *ἡμεῖς*, which serves only to increase the *Pathos*. But there can be no sufficient Reason assigned, why *Justin* should forsake both the *Hebrew* and the *Seventy*, and prefer *St. Matthew's* manner of expressing these two Prophecies, unless it was that *St. Matthew's* Gospel (in which these two Chapters were then included) was received by the *Christian Church* as *canonical*. Thus much as to the present Argument. I hope the Nature of the Proof will excuse the Length of it, and serve the *Reader* as a *Specimen* of that manner of *Demonstration* which might be easily carried throughout *all the Gospels*.

Thus then are we satisfied, from some of those Evidences which his *Lordship* refers to, that *Justin* and the *Christians* in his Days, could not be mistaken in the Reception of these Writings as *canonical*; and we are equally certain, that our present *Gospels* are the same that were *publickly* read and acknowledged in those Days:—But we shall have Occasion to speak more fully on this Head, in the following Pages. We have already seen it very strongly implied by *Justin*, That these *Gospels* were but *four* in Number; and the next Witness the *Bishop* calls, puts it beyond Contradiction: For *Tatian*, who was *Justin's* Scholar, did, as his *Lordship* observes from *Eusebius*,¹ compose a certain Harmony and Agreement of the *Gospels*; which he called *A Collection from the Four*. Which plainly shews,

M 2

that

¹ Euseb. l. 4. c. 29.—τὸ διὰ τεσσάρων.

that *Four*, and no more, were then acknowledged as *canonical*.

And of these four, *Irenæus* has given us a very particular Account, which I have already cited from the *Pastoral Letter*; from whence we are informed of the Names both of the *Apostles* and of their *Followers*, who writ the *Gospels*, and made up the Number of the *Four Evangelists*; as also of the Order wherein they writ, *viz.* That *St. Matthew* began, and *St. John* closed up the sacred History of the Life and Doctrine of the *Blessed Jesus*. And the *Genuineness* of these Writings was so far from being called in question, even by the Enemies of *Christianity*, that, as his *Lordship* has observed, *Irenæus* says, "The very Heretics gave their Testimony to them:"—And "that as to their Number, they were neither more nor less than four."

Here we may again expect to have the same Questions repeated in regard to *Irenæus*, as were mentioned above in respect of *Justin*; How could this Man know the *Truth* of what he affirms? Or, How can we know, That when he talks of *Gospels*, he means the same that we now have?

As to the first, I shall not judge it troublesome to myself, because I know it will be satisfactory to the *Reader*, to translate a Passage from an Epistle writ by *Irenæus* himself, to his old Acquaintance *Florinus*, and preserved in the Works of *Eusebius*.¹—"When I was yet very young, says he, under the Government of *Polycarp*, in the *Lower Asia*, I knew you making a very handsome Appearance in the Court, and endeavouring to be well esteemed by *Polycarp*; for I remember Things then done, better than those which have lately happened;

¹ H. E. l. 5. c. 20.

“ happened ; because the Instructions given to
 “ young Persons, grow up together with the
 “ Mind, and are united to it: So that I am
 “ now able to describe the very Place in which
 “ the blessed *Polycarp* sate when he reasoned to
 “ us, his Walk, his coming in, the Character
 “ of his Life, the Idea of his Body, and the
 “ Discourses which he made to the Multitude ;
 “ and how he spoke of the Conversation which
 “ he had with *John* and with other Persons
 “ who had *seen* the *Lord* ; and how he *remem-*
 “ *bred* what they said, and what those Things
 “ were which he had heard of them concern-
 “ ing the *Lord* ; and how *Polycarp*, having re-
 “ ceived an Account of his (*Christ*’s) Miracles
 “ and Doctrines,¹ from those who with their
 “ *own Eyes* had seen the *Word of Life*, deliver-
 “ ed all Things agreeable to the *Scriptures*.
 “ These Things I then diligently heard, thro’
 “ the Mercy of God that was upon me.”—

It is observable from this Passage, not only
 that *Irenæus* was bred up under *Polycarp*, who,
 as *Eusebius* testifies, was ² “ a Companion of
 “ the *Apostles*, and was ordained *Bishop* of the
 “ Church of *Smyrna* by those who were *Eye-*
 “ *witnesses* and Ministers of the *Lord* ;” but
 also, that at the Time of his Education, the
Scriptures of the *New Testament* or the *Gospels*,
 were declared *canonical*: for the Relations which
Polycarp made of the Doctrines and Miracles of
Christ, as he had received them from Persons
 who had been *Eye-witnesses* of the *Word of Life*,
 are

¹ καὶ περὶ τῶν δυνάμεων αὐτοῦ, καὶ περὶ τῆς διδασκαλίας, ὡς
 ὅσα τῶν ἀποστόλων τῆς ζωῆς τὰ λόγια παρεληφώς ὁ Πολύ-
 καρπος, ἀπήγγελε πάντα σύμφωνα τῇ γραφαί. H. E.
 l. 5. c. 20.

² τῶν ἀποστόλων ὁμιλητῆς Πολύκαρος. Ib. l. 3. c. 36.

are observed to have been in all Particulars the same as in the *Scriptures*, *πᾶντα σύμφωνα τῆς γραφῆς*. And what these *Scriptures* were, his *Lordship* has already shewn. So that here we have a sufficient Evidence, that the *Gospels* were then look'd on as a *Rule* of Faith and Manners; since the traditional Accounts even of *Polycarp* himself, were to be brought to them as to their proper *Standard*.

His *Lordship's* Reasoning therefore stands thus: *Polycarp*, who was a Companion of the *Apostles*, and constituted *Bishop* of *Smyrna* by those who had seen the *Lord*, cannot be supposed mistaken in the Choice and Use of those *Writings* which contained the Life and Doctrines of our blessed *Saviour*. *Ireneus*, who was bred up under *Polycarp*, and compared his traditional Accounts with the sacred *Text*, and from thence argued for their Veracity, can as little be thought to be *deceived* in the Reverence he bore to these *Writings*. In short, *Polycarp* received his Account immediately from the *Apostles*, and *Ireneus* his from *Polycarp* himself, without the Interposition of any third Person. Both of them sustained many Difficulties in the *Christian* Cause, both governed large and populous *Dioceses* for many Years, and both finally received the Crown of *Martyrdom* for their unalterable Adherence to the Contents of these *Books*. They were neither *deceived*, nor *Deceivers*.

It being certain therefore, that *Ireneus* could not possibly be mistaken in this Point, we shall easily prove, that the *second* Question must be held *affirmatively*, viz. That the *Four Gospels* we at present use, are the same as in his Time. The Method will be no other than what I fol-

lowed in regard to *Justin*; and the Proofs will be taken from his own Writings: But this I shall do in relation to the *two first Chapters* of *Sr. Matthew* only, which, as they say, are liable to the greatest Objections; and what occurs to us in such Writings of this *Father*, as are yet preserved, may stand thus:

“*Matthew* (says he) declares his Human Generation, saying, ¹“The Book of the Generation of Jesus Christ the Son of *David*, the Son of *Abraham*.” And again, ²“The Birth of Christ was on this wise.”—And in another Place,—“The Birth of Christ was in this manner; ³“When his Mother was betrothed to *Joseph*, before they came together, she was found with Child of the Holy Ghost. ⁴“Then when *Joseph* thought to put her away, because she was with Child, (behold) an Angel of God sitting by him, and saying, ‘Fear not to take unto thee *Mary* thy Wife, for that which is in her Womb is of the Holy Ghost: ⁵“And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his Name *Jesus*, for he shall save his People from their Sins. ⁶“And this was done that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet,—⁷“Behold a Virgin shall be with Child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call his Name *Immanuel*; which, being interpreted, is God with us.” And for all this he expressly, and by Name, quotes ^c *St. Matthew*.

And

¹ Matth. i. 1. ² v. 18. ³ v. 18. ⁴ v. 19.
⁵ v. 20. ⁶ v. 21. ⁷ v. 22. ⁸ v. 23.

^a Βίβλ. ① γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, υἱοῦ Δαβὶδ καὶ Ἀβραάμ.
Iren. l. 3. c. 11. Ed. Massuet.

^b *Ibid.* c. 16.

^c Ματθαῖο ③. κρητύλλει λέγων, c. 11. *Matthæus* ait, c. 16.

And in another Chapter thus: ^{1a}“*Matthew*
 “ says, that the Wise-men, coming from the
 “ East, said, We have seen his Star in the East,
 “ and are come to worship him: And being
 “ brought by the Star into the House of *Ja-*
 “ *cob* to *Immanuel*, they declared what he was
 “ whom they worshipped, by the Gifts they
 “ offered; ² Myrrh, because he was the Person
 “ who should die, and be buried for Mankind;
 “ Gold, because he was a King, of whose King-
 “ dom there was no End; Frankincense, be-
 “ cause he was God, who was made known in
 “ *Judea*, and manifested to those who sought
 “ him not.”—And *Matthew*, speaking of the
 “ Angel, says, ^{3b}“The Angel of the Lord ap-
 “ peared unto *Joseph* in a Dream: (*if it be ask'd*)
 “ of what Lord, he himself interprets it: ⁴ That
 “ it might be fulfilled, which was spoken of
 “ the Lord by the Prophet, Out of *Egypt* have
 “ I called my Son.”

From hence it is most manifest, that the *two*
first Chapters of *St. Matthew's Gospel* were in
 those Copies which *Irenæus* received from *Pol-*
ycarp, and *Polycarp* from the *Apostles*, and those
 who had been *Eye-witnesses* to the Actions of
 our *Lord*: And these Passages do also contain a
 sure Proof that they have been *faithfully* trans-
 mitted to us. The Force of this Argument
 might be easily extended to the *whole* of the
four Gospels: But of this more in its proper
 Place.

Had his *Lordship* stopt here, it would have
 been impossible for any one who had entered
 fairly into the Argument, and examined the
 Force

¹ Matth. ii. 2.

² v. 11.

³ v. 13.

⁴ v. 15.

^a Matthæus autem magos, &c. ait.

^b De Angelo Matthæus ait, c. 9. Ed. Massuet.

Force of that Evidence which is here produced, to disprove the *Authority* of our present *Gospels*; or to shew, that they were not received and submitted to by the Church of *Christ*, while some of the *Apostles*, and many more of those who had *seen the Lord*, and *minister'd* unto him, were actually living. If then the *Catholic Church* received these *Gospels* from the *immediate* Disciples of our Saviour, as a *Rule* of Faith and Manners, and set them upon the same foot as the *Jews* did the Writings of the *Old Testament*; (as has been abundantly proved) and if we are assured (as most certainly we are) that our present *Gospels* are *faithful* Transcripts from those primitive ones, his *Lordship* has manifestly precluded whatever can be urged from the Objections of the Inquirer: For,

First, As to the Authors of them, it is highly probable from *Polycarp*, and it is put beyond all Contradiction by his Disciple *Ireneus*, that they were received under the same *Titles* they at present bear. 2dly, As to the *Occasion*, That they were all published for the *Direction* and *Government* of the *Christian Church* in general. 3dly, As to the *Time* when,—we know that they were all abroad in the *World* before the Death of *St. John*. 4thly, As to the *Language* in which they were published, (which is ask'd in regard to *St. Matthew* only) we are certain that *Jussin* and *Ireneus*, and with them the *universal Church*, used our present *Greek Copy*, as what was recommended to them by the *Apostles* and *apostolical Men*. And if this Foundation stands, which I think can never be shaken, all that noisy Opposition which the *Inquirer* has collected, cannot have the least Force to destroy what is thus established.

N

For

For granting, that *St. Matthew* did originally write his *Gospel* in the *Hebrew*, or rather in that mix'd Language which was then used in *Judea*, it is very far from being improbable, that he himself, moved by the same Reasons that made him write it, might take a Translation of it along with him when he propagated the *Gospel* in other Countries; at least, so much (as I said before) is certain, That the *Gospel* we now have under his Name, is the same that was appealed to by the *Christian Catholic Church* in the Days of *Justin*; when among all Ranks and Degrees of Converts, there were many Men and Women of sixty and of seventy Years old, who must have received their Instruction from the *Apostles*, from the *Eye-witnesses*, or from *Bishops* and *Deacons* ordained immediately by the *Apostles*, and consequently can, in no View of Things, be supposed mistaken in so material a Point.

And this will hold equally true in all Respects as to the Testimony of *Ireneus*, who was educated under *Polycarp*, who was born but 33 Years after our *Saviour's* Crucifixion. So that the present *Greek Copy* of *St. Matthew*, now with us, has all the Evidence of its being canonical, that the Nature of the Thing will admit; viz. It was recommended and used as such by the primitive Church of *Christ*, while some of the *Apostles* and many of the *Eye-witnesses* were living; as also great Numbers of Men and Women who had seen and conversed familiarly, some with the *Apostles*, others with primary *Disciples*, and All with those of the first Succession. It was also universally acknowledged in the *Eastern* and the *Western Churches*, in *Asia*, in *Gaul*, in *Rome*.

Here

Here his *Lordship* might have made an End: The *Proof* that the *Four Gospels* are *authentic*, is distinct and complete: But being willing, as I conceive, to give some short Specimen of that manner of *Proof*, by which it may be easily shewn, that these Gospels were continually used by the *succeeding Generations*, he has mentioned two more Evidences: First, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, who, as the *Bishop* goes on, speaking of a Passage cited out of the *Egyptian Gospel*, says, "it is not found in the Four Gospels which have been delivered down to us." If we are asked, What Certainty *Clemens* could have in those Things, let us hear what he himself says as to the *Times* he lived in—"Men (says he) who have preserved the true Tradition of the blessed Doctrine immediately from *Peter* and *James, John* and *Paul*, the *Holy Apostles* (as a Child taking from a Father, but few are like their Fathers) have, by the Will of God, come down even to us, communicating those primitive and apostolical Seeds." From whence therefore should *Clemens* know, that there were but *Four Gospels* held *canonical*; whence, I say, but from the Authority of the *Catholic Church*, supported by the living Voice of those *Men* who received their *Knowledge* from the *Holy Apostles*?

To *Clemens* his *Lordship* adds *Origen*, "who mentioning the Writers of the Four Gospels by name, and in their Order, says, That these alone (and no other) had been received in the Church." What was the Learning, what were the Abilities of *Origen*, I need not say, but only

¹ Οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἀληθῆ καὶ μακαρεῖς οὖσι τοῖς διδασκαλίας παρέδωκεν, ἀπὸ Πέτρου καὶ Ἰακώβου, Ἰωάννου καὶ Παύλου, τῶν ἁγίων ἀποστόλων—ἥκον δὲ σὺν Θεῷ καὶ ἡς ἡμᾶς. Clem. Alex. Strom. l. 1.

only observe, That those Works of his which are yet extant, do most evidently prove,— that *our Gospels*, and the *four* he mentions, are the same.

Upon the whole then, the Evidence which the *Bishop* has here produced, is not only sufficient to demonstrate what he lays down, *viz.* “ That the Four Gospels contain a faithful and true Account of the Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus;” but does also necessarily imply, “ that they have been faithfully transmitted down to us.” Which is the second Thing the *Inquirer* objects to, and charges the *Bishop* as being defective in the Proof of it: Whereas I doubt not to shew (as I at first proposed) that his *Lordship* has laid before us such Arguments as are sufficient to prove their *faithful Transmission*, and *All* such as the Nature of his present Work would allow of: But first, I must give the *Reader* as good an Insight into the *Controversy* as I can; to which Purpose, I shall repeat the *Substance* of both their Arguments.

The Question runs thus: “ Whether these Four Gospels have been faithfully transmitted to the Christians of succeeding Ages?” which the *Bishop* affirms, and thus supports: “ In general, it rests upon those who call in question the Fidelity of the Transmission in this Case, to shew, that any *other* Book whatsoever, has such and so many plain and strong Testimonies of a *faithful* Transmission, as the New Testament, lest they—involve themselves in the Absurdity of rejecting all ancient Writings whatsoever, as not only altered from their Originals, but altered to such a degree as not

“ to

¹ Past. Lett. p. 63, 64.

“ to represent to us the genuine Meaning and
 “ Design of their Authors. It is well known
 “ how early the Christian Religion was carried
 “ into almost all Parts of the *Roman* Empire,
 “ into Regions and Countries very numerous
 “ and very distant from one another; and as
 “ Christianity spread, Copies of the New Te-
 “ stament spread with it, and not only remain-
 “ ed in the Hands of numbers of private Chri-
 “ stians, but were publickly received and read
 “ in their religious Assemblies, &c.”

To this the *Inquirer* replies: “ That the *Let-
 “ ter-writer* contents himself with barely assert-
 “ ing, *That this* (St. Matthew's) (among the other
 “ Gospels) *hath been faithfully transmitted to Chri-
 “ stians of succeeding Ages*; offering no Proof—
 “ but putting it upon *Infidels* rather to prove it
 “ for him, and to shew, *That any other Book
 “ whatsoever, has such and so many plain and
 “ strong Testimonies of a faithful Transmission, as
 “ the New Testament.*—And the ² *faithful Trans-
 “ mission* of St. Matthew's Gospel, can never be
 “ made fairly to appear from ecclesiastical Histo-
 “ ry only, it being impossible in the nature of the
 “ Thing, admitting, as that does, the *Original*
 “ of it to have been *corrupted*; which is the
 “ Case of no one profane Author that I know
 “ of.”—³ They easily submit to the *Letter-wri-
 “ ter's* fine Reasoning, *That after Christianity
 “ was carried into almost all Parts of the Ro-
 “ man Empire, &c.* which (by the way) could
 “ not be till toward the end of the Fourth Cen-
 “ tury: That then, indeed, it had been in vain
 “ for a private Christian, to have attempted
 “ any considerable Alteration in his Copy, with-
 “ out being found out and exploded by others:

“ (tho'

¹ Inquiry, p. 49.

² Ibid. p. 50.

³ Ibid. p. 56.

“(tho’ some Alterations we know were made;
 “found out; exploded; and yet continued.)
 “But, I say, the Adversary is not averse to
 “admit the Argument on this Head.”

It is necessary to premise in this place, That the *Bishop* is concerned to prove the *faithful* Transmission of no other Gospels than of these *Four*, whose Authority he has already established. The *Inquirer* shoots very wide of the Mark; for his *Lordship* has no more Business with the Gospel according to the *Hebrews* or the *Nazarenes*, than he has with that according to the *Egyptians*, the *Ebionites*, &c. or, indeed, than he has with any of the other *Apocryphal* Gospels; which, as *Fabritius* says, were specified under fifty distinct Titles.*

If the *Bishop's* Arguments have Weight enough to prove, that these Copies of the *Four Gospels*, which we make use of, have received no such Alterations as misrepresent the *genuine* Meaning of them to us, he has performed all he promised or designed. But the *Inquirer* thinks it unreasonable, that *Infidels* should be called upon to shew that any such Alterations, Interpretations, or Abridgments have been ever made. Whereas, in truth, this is the only Method of bringing the Question to a speedy Conclusion. To name the *Chapter* to which these Injuries have been offered, the *Persons* by whom, and the *Age* when, is an easy Task, provided any Ecclesiastical Author has ever mentioned a *Vitiation*.

* Titulos collegi quinquaginta: sed ex his plures tituli interdum unum tantum, ut ostendi, designant scriptum, &c. Cod. Apocr. N. T. p. 335.

* If the Reader is desirous to know more of this Nazarene Gospel, which Mr. Toland and the *Inquirer* make such a Stir about, he may consult Mr. Nye, Dr. Mill, Prol. p. 5, 6. or *Fabrit.* Cod. Apocr. N. T. p. 355 — 371.

lation of this nature. If History has been entirely silent, and never recorded any of these Attempts, groundless *Suspensions* and bare *Possibilities*, or rather moral *Impossibilities*, can have no Influence on a considering Mind. It is therefore incumbent, as his *Lordship* well observes, on *Infidels*, to shew some Reasoning founded on *Facts* and *Realities*, why they make so wide a Difference in the Treatment they give those *Gospels*, and what they grant to other *Histories* of the same Antiquity, or else to admit them *both* on an equal foot of Credit.

As to what the *Inquirer* abruptly throws in there, from the *Fulness* of his Heart, "of the Spirit of some Men's Christianity," and "of *Infidels* and *Heretics* smarting so often," I think his present Dissertation is a convincing Proof, that no Fears of this kind possess his own Heart. *Christ* and his *Apostles*, and the Church of *God*, were never used in a freer manner, by any Author I know of; and yet all this might have been spared, had the *Inquirer* but once thought, that all his *Zeal* and *Calumny* could never prejudice the *Christian Cause* with any one, whose Understanding is not weak enough to mistake Insult for Victory, Misrepresentation for Reality, and Abuse for Demonstration: So that we shall continue to declare,—"That Christianity requires no further Favour, than a fair and impartial Inquiry into the Grounds and Doctrines of it." But what has *Fairness* to do with those so gross Instances of false Evidence, which I have already shewn the *Inquirer* guilty of in his Misapplication of *Dodwell*, *Mill*, and *Clarke*; or *Impartiality*, with that bitter *Zeal* which is every where expressed against the primitive and present *Governors* of the

the Church? I am sure no one would be more concerned than myself, to see any "one smart for a fair and impartial Inquiry into any Notions whatsoever;" and his *Lordship's* Writings and Practice give me Reason to entertain the same Thoughts of him also.

But to return. The next Argument the *Bishop* has laid before us, is taken from the "Multitude of Copies spread almost over all Parts of the *Roman* Empire, and those in constant use among *private* Men, and in *publick* Assemblies." Whence we are desired to infer, the moral *Impossibility* of any material Corruptions. And to the Force of this Reasoning, in general, we see, the *Inquirer* says, "the Adversaries easily submit;" but then affirms, "that this could not be till toward the End of the fourth Century:" So that the *Time* when these *Gospels* were thus universally published, is now the only Point in question; it being agreed on both Sides, that such a *Publication*, such a prodigious *Number* of Copies, as must be then multiplied through all Countries, would prove a most effectual Method to secure them from any *material Corruption*, or to discover it if attempted.

In order to clear and settle this Debate, I must observe, that where the *Bishop* asserts, "That Copies of these holy *Gospels* were with great Zeal convey'd to remote Countries, by those who succeeded the Apostles in the Propagation of the Christian Faith," we are there referr'd to *Eusebius* for the Truth of this Assertion. The whole Passage stands thus, and is sufficient to determine the Dispute in favour of *Christianity*.

Quadratus

² *Past. Lett.* p. 43;

“*Quadratus* (says the Historian) was among those who shone forth in that Time, (*Trajan's* Reign); who, as it is said, was distinguish'd by the Gift of Prophecy at the same time with *Philip's* Daughters; and a great many more than these were famous at that Season: who being in the first Rank of Succession from the *Apostles*, as the divine Disciples of so great Men, they built up the Foundations of those Churches which the *Apostles* had laid in every Place, increasing, to a great degree, the preaching of (Christ) and sowing the salutary Seeds of the Kingdom of Heaven plentifully thro' all the World. For very many of the Disciples in those Days, having their Hearts struck by the heavenly Word, with a more earnest Love of Philosophy, first of all fulfilled the saving Command, and gave their Substance to the Poor; then going abroad, they performed the Work of *Evangelists*, being desirous to preach *Christ* to those who as yet had never heard the Word of Faith, and to deliver to them the Writing of the divine Gospels. And these Men, only laying the Foundation of the Faith in certain strange Places, ordained other Men to be *Pastors*; and having appointed them to improve those who were perfectly initiated, they went into other Countries and Nations, assisted by the Grace and Cooperation of God: For even in that Age were many *miraculous* Powers exerted by them thro' the *Holy Spirit*.”

There is room for several very pertinent Remarks to be made from this Passage, which induced me to give it at large. And,

O

First,

Ἰ. ἦ δὲ καὶ τῆς διαλαμπάντων καὶ καδράτου ἢ δὲ ἀμα
 ἦ φιλήτου συγκατατάσσοντες τὰς λαοὺς λέγει ἰχθ
 διαφύσαι, κτλ. 1. 3. c. 37.

First, As to the *Time*; these Things were done in the Reign of *Trajan*, which ended *A.D.* 117.

2dly, As to the *Men*; they were the *immediate* Successors of the *Apostles*, and they were endowed from *above* with the Power of working *Miracles*—They gave all they had to the Poor, &c.

3dly, The *Extent* of their Labours, or how far their Preaching might reach;—To the Churches which the *Apostles* founded in *every Place*, to the sowing plentifully the saving Seeds of the Kingdom of Heaven thro' *all the World*.

4thly, The *Manner* in which they did these Things; they preached *Christ*, and then gave the *Writing of the divine Gospels* as a standing Rule of Life.

Lastly, The *Care* they took that this *Faith* and these *Writings* might be preserved; they ordained other Men to be *Pastors*, and to perfect what they had begun.—And thus is the *Fact* in question determined fully and clearly in *Favour* of the *Gospels*, by vertue of that Authority which the *Bishop* has here produced.

And if any one doubts what is meant by the *first Succession from the Apostles*, when used as a *Date* or fix'd Period of Time, let him hear what Mr. *Dodwell* has remarked on this very Place. "When, says he, we speak of a *Succession* as a Mark of *Time*, according to *Eusebius*, we must place those in the *first Succession*,"

Cum de Διαδοχῇ tanquam temporis nota loquimur, illi πατρὶ Διαδοχῇ, pro mente Eusebii, vixisse censendi sunt, qui ultimorum ἀποστόλων, seu Apostolorum, seu aliorum Domini Discipulorum, fuissent ipsi Discipuli. *Dissert.* 1. in *Iren.* §. 26.

" *sion*, who were the Disciples of the last *Eye-*
 " *witnesses*, either of the *Apostles* or of any other
 " of the *Lord's* Disciples, but who lived so long
 " after these *Eye-witnesses*, as to be proper
 " *Witnesses* of the *Apostolical* Traditions in the
 " following Age. Therefore those who, in
 " the Reign of *Trajan*, were old enough to be
 " capable of *Instruction*, if they were instructed
 " by any of the *Eye-witnesses* (whom we have
 " shewn to have lived till that Time); those
 " Men, according to *Eusebius's* Reckoning,
 " were to be numbered in the *first Succession*."

From hence then we may be fully satisfy'd,
 that those Persons on whose Authority and Pra-
 ctice the *Bishop* builds, received their *Christia-*
nity, and all Things necessary to continue it,
 from those very *Eye-witnesses* who received the
 same from *Christ* himself: And, to use the
 Words of the *Pastoral Letter*, "What should
 " tempt or incline these first Christians to cor-
 " rupt Books that contained those Truths on
 " which they grounded all their Hopes, and
 " for which they were ready to sacrifice their
 " Lives?" Was this single Consideration, tho-
 roughly pursued thro' all its Views, by an im-
 partial Mind, it would, of itself, go a great way
 to convince an unprejudiced Person, that no
 Attempts of this Nature could be made or con-
 cealed by the Church, while *Christianity* was in
 a State of Persecution: And that no material
 Alterations could be effected, when it was the
 professed Religion of the *Empire*, every one is
 willing enough to acknowledge.

And yet the *Inquirer*, that he may not seem
 to give up the Cause entirely, adds, in a Paren-
 thesis,—"Tho' some Alterations we know were
 " found out, exploded, and yet continued."

To which, I conceive, he expects no other Answer than a Denial in as many Words.

But moreover, ¹“The Appeals which have
“been constantly made to these Writings ever
“since Controversies arose in the Church,
“which was as early as the second Century :”
And “the ²many early Translations out of the
“Greek into other Languages (*Syriac, Latin,*
“*&c.*) are other Arguments suggested by the
“*Bishop*, and such as our *Adversaries* can never
“overthrow.”—And ³“as to the *various Rea-*
“*dings*, his *Lordship* has fully proved, and has
“the full Concurrence of all Men versed in
“this part of *critical* Learning, That from the
“greater Number of *Manuscripts*, we are fur-
“nished with the *best Means* of giving a *cor-*
“*rect Edition* of an Author.” Must we be
always repeating what the greatest *Criticks*
have so often demonstrated? Or is it to be ex-
pected, that in a Treatise of *this Nature*, his
Lordship should be obliged to give as full an
Account of the *faithful Transmission of the Gos-*
pels as *Dr. Mill* has done (and a most exact and
elaborate Work it is) in his *Prolegomena*, under
the Title,—*De Statu sacri Textus N. T. per om-*
nia Ecclesie secula.

A Writer who understands *himself* and his
Subject, must, as I before observed, confine his
Pen within such Bounds as the Rules of *Criti-*
cism, founded in the Judgment and Experience
of Mankind, have placed to every different kind
of Writing. The Tendency of his *Lordship's*
Design, allowed him only to speak of the Evi-
dence for the *Canon of Scripture*, in a short, ge-
neral, and comprehensive manner; to refer to
undoubted

¹ *Past. Lett.* p. 65.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.* p. 66.

undoubted *Authorities*, and assert demonstrable and conclusive *Facts*: And that his Lordship has performed this, is unquestionable; nay, the *Inquirer* has not so much as cross-examined one single Witness. And

As to the *faithful Transmission* of those Writings, the most powerful Arguments that can be used, are here laid before us, in such a manner as the Nature of a *Pastoral Letter* required:

“ The Silence and Impotency of our Adversaries, the Multitude of Copies spread into all Parts of the *Roman Empire* in the Reign of *Trajan*, by the immediate Successors of the Apostles; the same publickly read in all Christian Assemblies every Sunday, spoken of as an establish’d Practice in the Year 140; the Controversies which began in *Trajan’s* Time, and the continual Appeal occasion’d by them to these Writings; the early Translation of them into many Languages; the Agreement of *Manuscripts* in all material Points; their great Number and *Antiquity*, some of them being above 1200 Years old.”

And now I hope the *Inquirer* will join with me, and fairly own, that since his Lordship has attended to, and made good these two Heads, as far as they relate to the *Gospels*, he has merited the *Applause* of all *Christendom*.

And that the *Inquirer* may not be backward in giving his Share of it, I must again desire him to recollect, That the *Bishop* is not in the least concerned with the *Nazarene Gospel*, which is the *Hero* of his *Drama*; and, consequently, not obliged to speak so much as a single Word about its *faithful* or *unfaithful* Origin or Transmission. That *Gospel* of *St. Matthew* which was

publickly

quickly received into the Canon by Men of the first Succession, the immediate Disciples of the Apostles, and which has continued there ever since;—That is the Gospel his Lordship speaks of; and of which, as has been shewn, he has proved every thing that is necessary to make it be acknowledged as authentick.

So that to conclude, the Title Page may still remain in the Front of our Testaments—"Translated out of the original Greek;" that very Greek which the primitive Church received into the Canon: Altho' the Inquirer says, "That it is generally reputed by our present learned Clergy, * A very faulty Translation from a modern Greek Edition, of a bad Greek Translation, out of the lost Hebrew Translation from a Greek Original that was never seen." I do not envy the Inquirer whatever Pleasure may be had from the Invention of such wonderful Genealogies, but must have better Authorities than his bare Assertion, to make me think, That our present learned Clergy have really subscribed to such a Derivation of St. Matthew's Gospel!

* Inquiry, p. 55.

F I N I S.

ERRAT. Page 49. line 18. for Ports read Parts.